THE NARRATIVE WAR SONGS OF THE OHAFIA IGBO

A Critical Analysis of their Characteristic Features in Relation to their Social Function

by

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Dedicated to my Wife and Son

CHIOMA and OGAADI

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ABSTRACT

War songs (abù-ahā) are by far the most important genre of literature in the oral tradition of the formerly warlike Ohafia Igbo people of south-eastern Nigeria. Performed by specialist amateurs on a wide variety of social and ritual occasions, the songs form part of a complex of musical expressions (iri-ahā) through which the people's myth of a past heroic age is periodically re-enacted for the purpose of inspiring the young to emulate the commitment of their forbears to the ideal of self-sacrificing service to society in the single-minded pursuit of honour.

In this first attempt to analyse the songs as a form of oral traditional poetry, attention is focussed on their most highly developed category, the narrative category. Based on texts and testimonies recorded in the course of field research, the analysis presents the songs as artistic compositions with a distinctive social function which is reflected in the characteristic features of their content, form and performance. It is divided into three parts.

Part I (Background and Content) discusses the development of the heroic ideal of which the songs are an expression and its ramifications in the contents of the texts. Part II (Language, Structure and the Creative Process) examines the oral formulaic devices used in the presentation of the heroic themes of the songs in traditional poetic and narrative structures which are nevertheless varied by individual singers to suit different audiences in new contexts of situation. Part III (Reception and Evaluation) considers the evaluation of the songs by the Ohafia people themselves and the effect of this on the survival and continuity of the tradition amid social change.

The analysis is based on seventy-four texts (Appendix II) and representative examples of these are provided in Appendix I.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of the research on which this thesis is based I received the help and encouragement of several individuals and institutions. It is my pleasant duty to acknowledge these now.

First of all I wish to thank the singers for agreeing to record their songs in pre-arranged sessions, often at very short notice and sometimes without any fees at all. I am particularly grateful to Kaalu Igirigiri, who put me up in his hut whenever I found myself benighted in his hometown of Okon. Kaalu is no doubt the best singer alive today in Ohafia and much of what I know of the art and function of the narrative war songs derives from our numerous informal conversations and formal interviews.

I cannot fully express my gratitude to my friend, Mr. Ojo Maduekwe and his parents (Pastor and Mrs. Maduekwe of Asaga). The entire family has always patronized my interest in the songs. Not only did they always assist in arranging performances, they also always agreed to allow them to take place in their house, sometimes till very late in the night.

Thanks are also due to Mr. Chijioke Abagwe, formerly of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation. It was through Mr. Abagwe's broadcasts over Radio Nigeria Enugu that my interest in the songs was awakened, and later - during the

Nigerian civil war years (1967-70) - when we became close associates in the Biafran propaganda complex, I was spurred on by his enthusiastic reflections on the songs and their milieu to ultimately decide to take up their collection and study seriously.

Many other Ohafia people helped me in various ways, not least the numerous students who assisted me in transcribing the tape-recordings and understanding some obscure allusions without which translation would have proved impossible. I am also grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Ukpai Emele of Akaanu, who in London in 1976, were able to provide me with a copy of Abagwe's recording of the only three songs from Okonkwo Oke of Akaanu (Poet A) cited in this study.

It was my parents who provided the pocket money with which I began collecting texts - as a hobby - soon after the war in 1971. Little did they know then that this hobby of my undergraduate days would one day take me away from them for so long a time and at a time when they most needed my help. I am very grateful for their numerous sacrifices, and especially for their abiding patience and faith in me.

My brothers and sisters have all assisted me in one way or the other, not only in organizing my field work but in meeting additional expenses. Ndubuisi made many recordings of texts and interviews on my behalf; in the midst of examinations, Chike was able to put in long hours

in organizing the transcription of texts at Enugu (in 1978), and Ikechukwu and his wife, Cordelia, both supervised and paid for the transcriptions. I acknowledge the award of a Commonwealth Academic Staff Scholarship which, in combination with the University of Nigeria (Nsukka) Junior Fellowship award, enabled me to come to London to undertake full-time research at the School of Oriental and African Studies. I am also grateful to the University of Ibadan for offering me a travel grant which made possible the final revision of the thesis in the Long vacation of 1979.

Perhaps without the efforts of my teachers, Professor M.J.C. Echeruo of the University of Ibadan, and Professor Jack Carnochan of the School of Oriental and African Studies, this thesis would never have been presented at all. Professor Echeruo's interest in my work dates back to the earliest period of my dilettante research and his confidence in me even in the midst of serious setbacks has helped me solve grave psychological problems. I am particularly grateful to him for introducing me to Professor Carnochan, a consummate teacher and an admirable human being who within a few weeks of supervision was able to give me far more positive guidance than I was able to get in the preceding four years of frustrating work.

It is with the deepest gratitude and love that I thank my wife and son, Chioma and Ogaadi, for their

patience and for the numerous sacrifices they made in order to see this work through, and it is to them that I dedicate the work. Finally I wish to thank Mrs.V. Williams of Gower Street for undertaking to proof-read and prepare the whole thesis for presentation at so short notice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF CHARTS

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

Publications

CEL - Cassell's Encyclopoedia of Literature. London: 1953.

EPP - Encyclopoedia of Poetry and Poetics
Edited by Alex Preminger, Frank J. Warnk and O.B. Hardison, Jr. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965.

PDM - The Penguin Dictionary of Music

SOED - Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd Edition. 1964.

Singers' Names

OE - Ọkọnkwo Okē of Àkàanụ̄ (Poet A)

KI - Kaalụ̄ Ìgìrìgiri of Ọkọ̀n (Poet B)

EK - Egwù Kaalụ̄ of Asǎgā (Poet C)

OK - Ọ̀gba Kaalụ̄ of Àbị̀à (Poet D)

EO - Èchěmē Ogwo of Ebem (Poet E)

NM - Ǹjọkụ̄ Mmǎjū of Ùdùma Àwọkē (Poet F)

Texts by Various Singers (with numerals indicating chronological order of recording)

A - Ọ̀kọ̀nkwo Okē (OE)

B - Kaalụ̄ Ìgìrìgiri (KI)

C - Egwù Kaalụ̄ (EK)

D - Ọ̀gba Kaalụ̄ (OK)

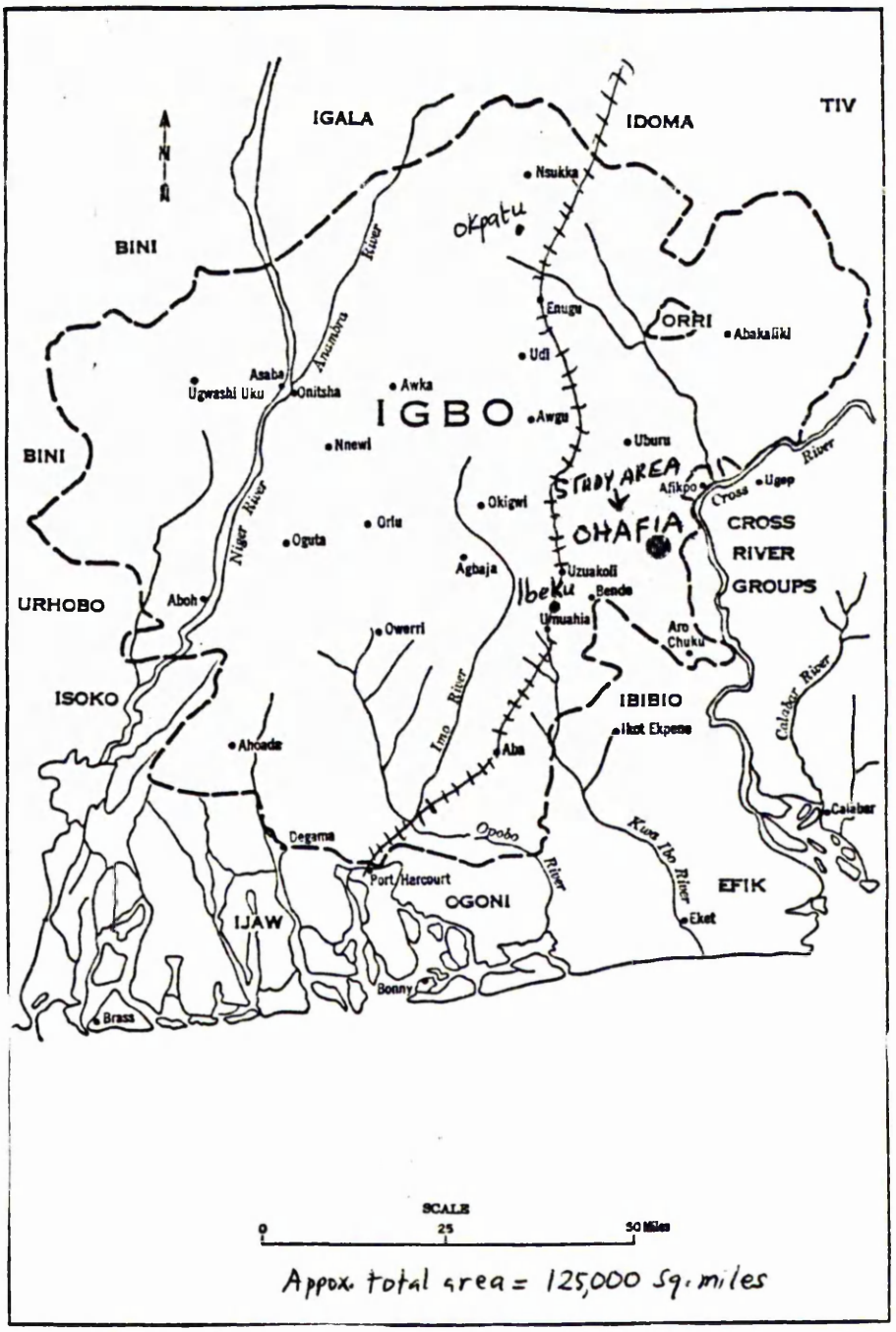
E - Èchěmē Ogwo (EO)

F - Ǹjọkụ̄ Mmǎjū (NM)

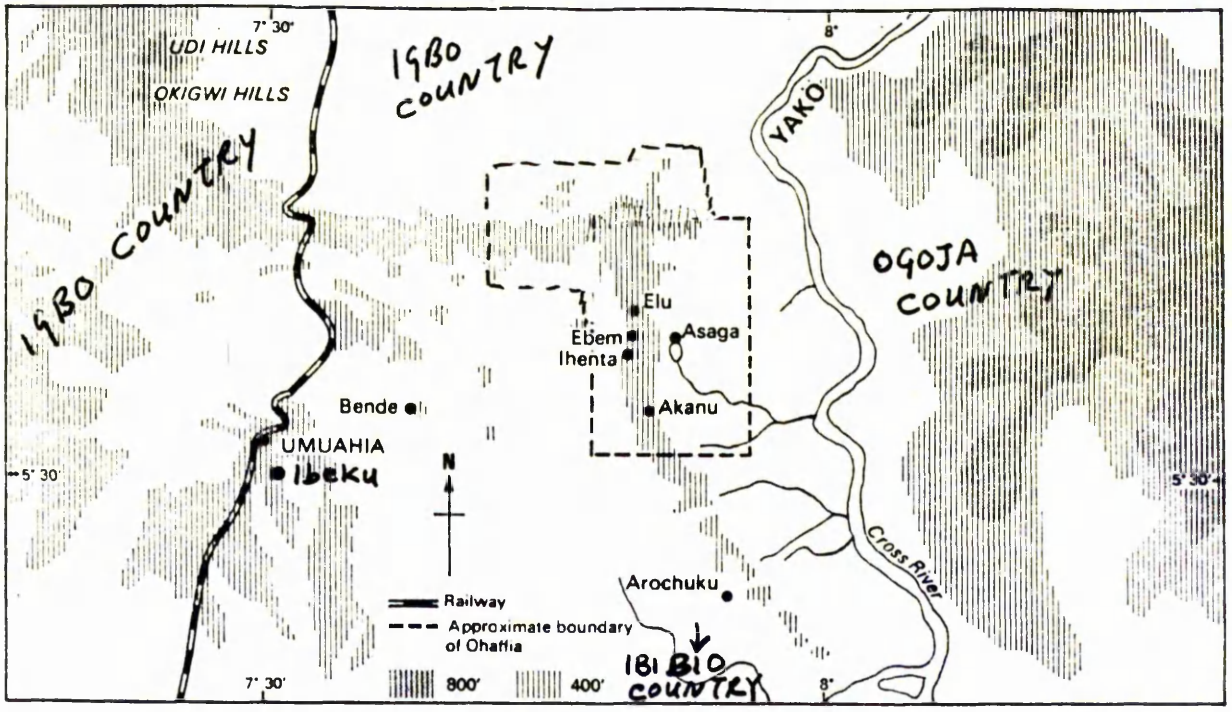
TITLES OF TEXTS (see Appendix II)

ABOU - Texts 1-2
IMJE - Texts 3-4
AA - Texts 5-6
LAOJ - Texts 7-8
NK - Text 9
AKP - Text 10
IOZ - Texts 11-15
EIJ - Text 16
EA - Texts 17-19
OKI - Text 20
KIM - Text 21
IO - Texts 22-26
NM - Texts 27-33
IDK - Text 34
AM - Texts 35-41
EGB - Texts 42-45
UA - Texts 46-48
NAF - Text 49
OK - Texts 50-52
IJK - Text 53
OGB - Texts 54-55
KEM - Text 56
UKR - Text 57
DON - Text 58
IMZ - Text 59
UGN - Text 60
ELU - Text 61
NOY - Text 62
IKW - Text 63
NAU - Texts 64-65
ENA - Text 66
OMN - Texts 67-69
NIO - Texts 70-74

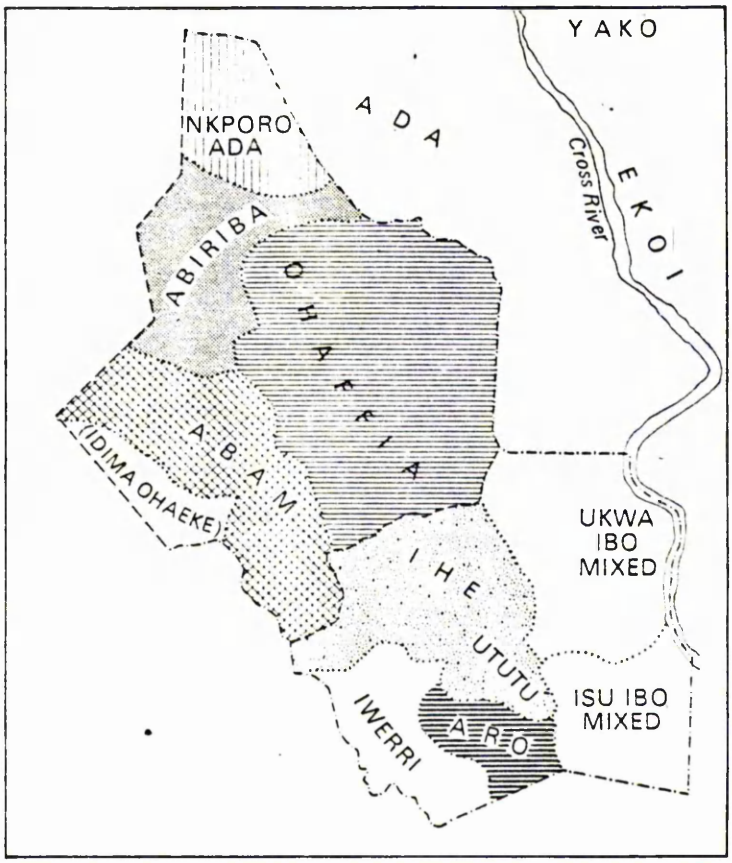
LIST OF MAPS



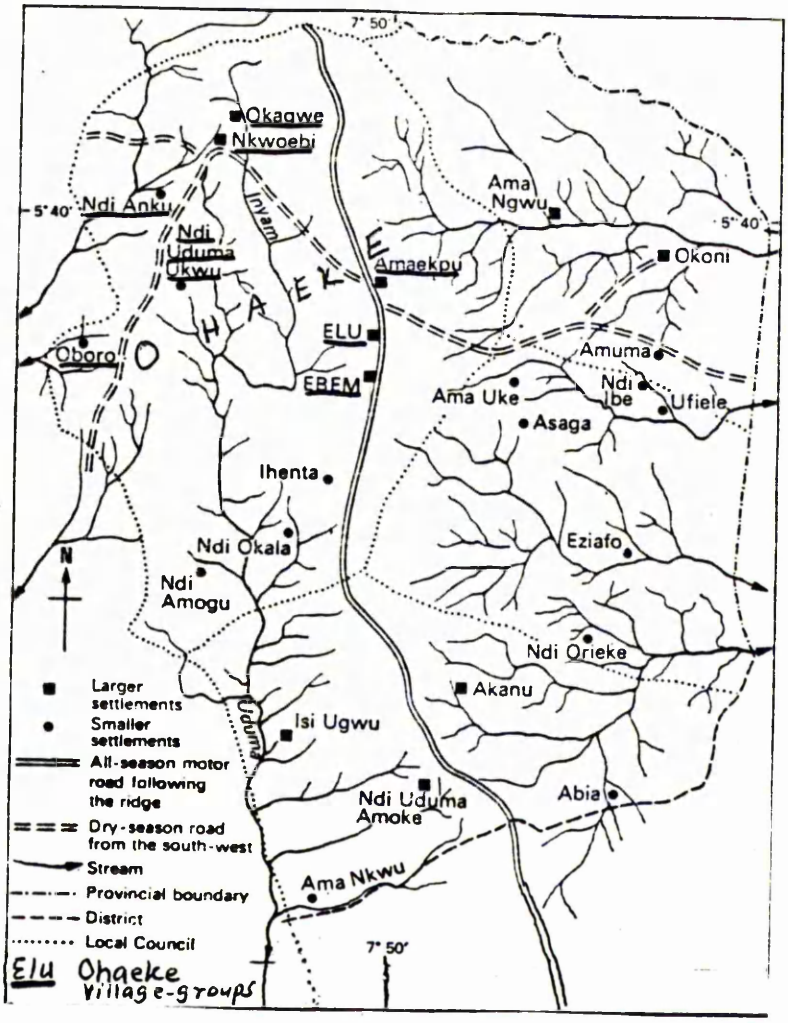
Map 1: Igbo Country showing the position of Ohafia (After Forde and Jones, 1950).



Map 2: Topographical map of parts of the Cross River Basin showing the 'hoe-shaped' Ohafia ridge (after Nsugbe, 1974)



Map 3: Cross River Igbo territory
(After Nsugbe, 1974)



Map 4: Ohafia showing the 25 village-groups with the Ohaeke-groups (p.5) Underlined (after Nsugbe, 1974:4).

PREFACE

The present study is essentially an initial exploration of a previously uncharted territory. While a lot has been written and published during the past few years on various aspects of Igbo oral literature (see Chukwuma, Echeruo, Egudu, Green, Nwoga, Ugonna and Uzochukwu) little or no attention has been paid to any corpus of historical narrative poetry of the kind analysed in this work.[1]

The reason for this is however not difficult to perceive. Two deeply entrenched fallacies, which many scholars have tended to accept in the past almost without question, made any investigation of this kind appear futile. The first, emanating from 19th Century anthropologists and reiterated in various ways even in many current writings, asserts that non-centralized societies like the Igbo society generally lack the need to keep historical records and that they also lack social structures and organization of the kind[2] which promotes the crystallization of historical knowledge in sophisticated literary forms such as the epic or other forms of heroic narrative poetry.

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1. It would seem from inquiries made by correspondence during the last few years (1976-79) that this type of poetry is in fact more widespread throughout Igboland than I originally thought.

2. The patronage of royal courts and wealthy aristocrats is frequently mentioned in various sources.

The second fallacy which is related to the first, emanates from old-fashioned classical scholars for whom the Homeric epics and the great epics of the orient are the only types of heroic poetry worthy of the name. These epics commonly deal with kings, princes and other royalties. From this, the fallacy has established itself through several centuries of dogmatic assertions, that heroes (the special breed of men who live for honour and noble action) are invariably of royal or aristocratic stock and that heroic poetry, especially the epic, is the special preserve of societies dominated by this class of men.[3]

The songs presented and discussed in the present study are part of the growing body of evidence to the contrary.[4] They reveal that in the non-monarchical and non-aristocratic Igbo society of Ohafia (Chapter 1, Section 1.1), people not only care but do care very much for history; that the people have heroes, albeit of different class from those in aristocratic and monarchical societies, but no less committed to the quest for honour through noble action in the service of their society- they also reveal that the practice of heroic poetry in the form of narrative war songs (see Chapters 2 and 3) is not only highly regarded but that it thrives well under the enthusiastic patronage of the general populace despite the absence of royal courts.

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3. See de Vries, 1963 : 166, and Chadwick, 1932: 64.

4. See especially Blackburn's article on the so-called 'Tamil heroic ballads' (1978).

The point cannot be overstressed, especially in view of strong pronouncements such as the following by no less an authority in African oral literature than Ruth Finnegan, on what she regards as the relative absence of 'myths' (the very soul of heroic poetry) in African oral literature:

> myths in the strict sense are by no means common in African oral literature. This is in spite of the narratives presented as myths in many popular collections. It is true that many of these have an aetiological element, refer to supernatural beings, or are concerned with events set in some remote time in the past. But they do not necessarily also possess the other attributes of 'myths' - their authoritative nature and the way in which they are accepted as truthful accounts (1970): 362).

In fact, Finnegan goes further to say "that myths in the strict sense do not seem, on the evidence we have, to be a characteristic African form at all" (1970: 362).

As we shall see from the present study, this is totally erroneous and misleading. Although, in this study, we shall use the term 'myth' in the more restricted sense of tales about the origins of natural and socio-cultural phenomena (see Chapter 4),[5] it seems clear that, taken as a whole, the body of historical traditions, akuko-àlà (stories of the land and the earth, which form the content of the songs[6] are par excellence examples of what Finnegan, quoting Bascom (1965: 4), regards as 'myths'. The testimonies recorded in the field by singers and several local evaluators

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5. The introductory section of Chapter 4.

6. Ibid.

leave us in no doubt about this. As will be seen from the discussion of these testimonies in Chapter 9, what people regard as the essence of these traditions are precisely those attributes of 'myths' which Finnegan fails to see in African oral literature - "their authoritative nature and the way in which they are accepted as serious and truthful accounts".

The mythological-historical material of the songs is expressed in a form and by means of devices which remind us of the art of epic poetry. Chief among these formal devices are sets of fixed traditional phrases which serve as formulas for the presentation of the heroic themes of the narratives (Chapter 5). There are also recurrent themes and motifs as well as episodes which go into the making of various tales and which like the formulas are sometimes transferred from tale to tale as from one version of the same tale to another (see Chapters 5-8). But despite these affinities with epic poetry, the songs are generally brief in compass, rarely going beyond 400 lines in length. Indeed, they generally remind us of the briefer forms of heroic narrative poetry variously described as heroic lays (de Vries, 1963), heroic ballads (Blackburn, 1978), or oral epic songs (Bodker, 1965), and commonly regarded in Western criticism as the ancestors of the epic (see de Vries, 1963 and Kirk, 1972).[7] But apart from a few studies such as

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7. Kirk thinks that these songs belong to the 'originative stage' of what he regards as the four stages of epic development and decay (Epic cycle). The other three stages he describes as the creative, reproductive and degenerative stages (pp. 95-6).

Chadwick's study of the Russian byliny (1932), and Blackburn's study of the so-called 'Tamil heroic ballads' (1978), much of what we know about heroic narrative poetries of brief compass are largely speculative and based on such fragmentary survivals as the heroic songs of the pre-Homeric Mycaenenian antiquity (see Bowra, 1972) and the Eddic lays of medieval Northern Europe (see Ker, 1908 and de Vries, 1963).

The present study is one of the first detailed analyses of a living example of such heroic narrative poetry. The material it presents will thus be of world-wide interest in comparative literature. One thing we can learn from these songs is that the brevity of the heroic lay or ballad (call it what you will), is not necessarily an indication that it is an epic in formation. (My original thesis proposal sought to approach the songs in this way). In fact, the songs appear to have attained their highest level of development and even to have reached a degenerative stage (see Chapter 10). Green (1948) suggests a social basis for the brevity of the songs, although her suggestion reflects one of the fallacies referred to above:

> The nature of Igbo social organization may not be irrelevant to the fact that their literature seems to tend to the episodic rather than to the long chronicle, to lyric rather than to epic poetry, and to the impromptu as well as the traditional. The fact, moreover, that singing, versifying, story-telling is more the affair of the man in the street than the professional may be partly due to the absence of a king's court or a wealthy aristocracy to encourage the growth of a differentiated class of this kind (1948: 839).

But perhaps a more important social factor underlying the brief compass of the Ohafia narratives is the egalitarianism of the Igbo.[8] Thus, while in monarchical and aristocratic societies, there are usually one or two great heroes whose lives and careers are celebrated by successive generations of bards, for example, the Sene-Gambian Sunjata (see Innes, 1974), what we have in the egalitarian Ohafia Igbo society is a gallery of numerous heroes, each hero presented as important as any other and as deserving to be remembered among the many braves to which the society owes its survival, greatness and uniqueness among all Igbo people. But this is merely a suggestion which may well provide good material for further comparative critical inquiry.

Also of comparative interest are certain details of the background and content of the songs presented in Part I: the role of head-hunting in the heroic age; the nature of the evolution of heroic narrative poetry and its relationship with simpler non-narrative songs and chants often identified with it (see Chapter 2), the composite character of the narratives, both in their use of the modes

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8. The Igbo-speaking people of south-eastern Nigeria are well-known to history and the social sciences on account of the non-centralized and egalitarian character of their social system. In a relatively small country or less than 125,000 square miles on both sides of the lower reaches of the River Niger (see Map 1), there are no less than 200 small confederations of village-groups each of which behaves and regards itself as a distinctive 'national' entity, with a distinctive tradition of origin, a distinctive culture and even a distinctive geographical environment. Each group is essentially equal to any other, and within each group each family and each individual is regarded as equal to any other, and there is no barrier against even a liberated slave rising up to become the leader of his own community, providing he possesses the wit, ability and moral strength so to do.

of various literary forms (lyrical, oratorical, invocative and fabular) and in the admixture of realism and fantasy, of historical tradition (myth, legend and fact) with fable and allegory in their content (see Chapter 4).

There are also points of comparative interest in the discussion of the language and structure of the songs and the nature of the creative process involved in their composition (Part II). On the use of traditional epithet, Parry in his studies of Homer and the Oral Epics of the Yugoslavs, unequivocally dismisses the existence of the category of particularized epithets and insists that all epithets are generic and are used almost in an indiscriminate manner to refer to any hero as a member of the same genus of men. For Parry, therefore, the only factor that governs the use of these devices is just metrical convenience. A different picture emerges from the present study. Epithets (Chapter 5) tend to belong more to the particularized category forming what we may describe after Backlund (1976), as "frozen noun-adjective collocations" with the names of the heroes to whom they refer. In these "frozen collocations" are preserved what the singers and the hearers alike regard as the authentic heroic images of particular heroes, including such details as their legendary role in history, their extraordinary physical and moral attributes and their relationships with other great heroes or groups in the heroic world; thus, to transfer one epithet that belongs to any particular hero to another is not only considered by

the hearers to be a serious breach of art but also of tradition (Chapter 5). Collocation and associationism then play a more important part in the making of the songs than sheer metrical convenience.[9] It is in fact doubtful whether metre exists in the structure of the songs, as the detailed and pragmatic analysis provided in Chapter 6 does not reveal any rigid metrical scheme of stresses, syllables or tones.[10] But with repetition and parallelism operating at every level of language, generations of singers have been able to evolve complex poetic structures which are manipulated by individual singers in such a way as to maintain the stability of the traditional images of heroes formed out of the epithets and at the same time create variation in response to the demands of new audiences in new contexts of performance across boundaries of space and time (Chapters 6 to 8).

The study of the creative role of the individual singer and of the functional-aesthetic criteria underlying audience responses to literature and its actual performance is still in its infancy in the criticism of African oral literature. The present thesis provides one of the first detailed explorations of these new areas of research, and the analysis of the traditional criteria underlying audience responses and the way in which they are reflected in the

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9. See Section 5.1 of Chapter 5 for a brief comment on this vis-a-vis the non-metrical nature of the present Ohafia Igbo songs.

10. See section 6.2 of Chapter 6.

nature of the material evaluated (see Chapter 9) is the first sustained effort of its kind. Indeed the approach to the songs in the thesis as a whole draws substantially from the way the singers and other local evaluators insist on interpreting them, namely in terms of their social function.

Contrary to what Finnegan says about the tendency of this kind of approach to conduce the neglect of various aesthetic considerations (1970: 330-334),[11] it seems clear from our study of the way Ohafia people themselves evaluate their songs that, for them, functional and aesthetic judgement are indivisible components of the same axiological system. As will be seen from Chapter 9, testimonies on such as aesthetic criteria as 'clarity' (Section 9.5) and 'creative variation' (Section 9.6) invariably refer to the necessity for 'authenticity' (e.g. the avoidance of "extraneous elements") and the effective realization of those poetic and stylistic attributes of the narratives which sharply define the image of the hero and enhance the emotional impact of the whole presentation on the hearers (see Section 9.4). On 'functionality' (section 9.3), various testimonies emphasize such factors as inspiration, enlightenment, cultural documentation and moral edification, factors which the analysis of the texts will clearly show to be the main determinants of the selection of elements which

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11. The emphasis on social function in this study, however, has nothing to do with "the 'structural functional ' approach of Radcliffe-Brown and others" criticized in Finnegan.

constitute the themes of the songs and the traditional and individual manner in which these elements are presented on various occasions (see Chapter 8).

There is in fact no value in merely analysing the aesthetic features of any form of literature without relating these features to the social or psychological environment out of which they sprang. To do this is decidedly in the best tradition of literary criticism; it is an approach vindicated by the positive achievements of the growing discipline of literary sociology (see Escarpit, 1958).[12] In its conception of the narrative war songs of the Ohafia Igbo as artistic compositions with a distinctive social function which is reflected in the characteristic features of their content, form and performance, the present thesis is essentially an exercise in literary criticism within the framework of the sociology of literature.

This socio-literary approach has inevitably given rise to numerous comments on geography, history, social organization and culture, especially in the first part of the thesis.[13] It seems to me indeed that much can be

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12. The benefits of literary sociology in English criticism are best observed in Raymond Williams' Culture and Society (1958), Q.D. Leavis' Fiction and the Reading Public (1932) and Ian Watts' The Rise of the Novel (1947).

13. Much of what is said in Part I (Background and content) on the ways in which various realia of geographical, historical social and cultural environment reflected in the content, form and practice of literature may be cited as an illustration of what sociologists of literature regard as the 'ecology of literature'.

gained from a further investigation of these facets of the background of the songs:

Oral literature is notoriously undependable as source-material for factual history; but it would be wrong for historians to neglect so rich and varied local evidence such as is represented by the Ohafia war songs, especially in their attempts to reconstruct that important epoch of south-eastern Nigerian history to which the songs refer - the period immediately preceding British colonialism in Nigeria (see Chapter 1, section 1.2). There is very little written documentation of internal affairs of south-eastern Nigeria in this epoch of slave-trade and constant warfare. But, as indicated in Chapter 4 of this study (section 4.2), some of the allusions contained in the songs, especially in the fixed epithets, convey what appear to be true-to-life pictures of various aspects of the history of that age. With the historical methodology proposed in Vansina (1965)[14] a great deal of insight can be gained from studying various versions of the tales and correlating them with the established facts. The epithet-system of the songs (Chapter 5) deserves to be given even closer attention, as they seem to be verbal fossils containing valuable insights into the history, social life and culture of the Ohafia people, albeit coloured by myth and legend.

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14. Jan Vansina's historical methodology, as applied to the extraction of facts from African oral literature is discussed in Finnegan, 1970: 46, 83, 243, 258, 368, 372 and 470.

The study of any form of literature is naturally a study of the dialect or language in which that literature occurs. This is irrespective of any explicit analysis of linguistic structures. No such analysis is undertaken in this study. But this notwithstanding, many points of interest about the Ohafia dialect emerge from the literary analysis, especially in view of the fact that this is the first time the dialect has been reduced into writing. It may well be that linguists reading the texts may be impelled to attempt to investigate such peculiarities of the dialect as the use of combinations of the first person and second person pronouns (e.g. mu gī = me you) to express the concept of "I myself" instead of the normal Igbo form, mu onwe m.[15] There are also numerous loan-words from the neighbouring Ibibio and special elements of vocabulary which reflect the warlike preoccupations of the people in the past. These deviations are however not sufficient to support the view expressed in some sources that the Ohafia dialect is a different language from the dialects spoken in the Igbo heartland.

I took up the study of these songs alongside other forms of Igbo oral literature as a creative writer seeking traditional models for artistic creation in my own native tongue,[16] after years of frustrating work in the English

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15. They are other such combinations as ya mū (you me) for 'you yourself', and gi mū (he me) for 'he himself'.

16. For discussions of my earlier work, see Jahn (1972), Times Literary Supplement (1973) and Thomas (1974).

language. I daresay that the experience has been richly rewarding and I look forward to a completely new phase of my literary career, one in which the lessons learnt from the combination of economy of expression and clarity in the Ohafia songs will, in addition to many other factors, help to eliminate the tendency towards sheer obscurity in my earlier work.[17] I believe that most other African writers of my generation are in need of these lessons. The study of African oral literature today is not merely an academic exercise but the process of discovering the authentic traditional roots from which I believe modern African writing, especially in African languages, must draw in order to flower with a distinctive life of its own.

I began collecting texts in a dilettante spirit in 1971 after an initial field exploration in December 1970. But my interest in the songs dates further back, to 1967, when I first learnt about the narrative and heroic quality of the songs through summaries of their plots given by Mr. Chijioke in a broadcast over Radio Nigeria. Later, during the Nigerian civil war (1967-70), Chijioke Abagwe and I became associates in the Biafran propaganda complex and held many conversations on the songs in the course of which I finally decided to take up their collection and study seriously.

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17. I was particularly moved by a letter to the Editor of Omabe: The Nsukka Poetry Monthly (Number 7, January 1973) which criticized my poetry as follows: "Chukwuma Azuonye's poem 'Umbered Streets' is rather obscure. It is in sharp contrast to Egudu's 'Arguments' which, I think, exploits successfully the repetition that often characterizes traditional oral poetry". (p.5).

Soon after graduating from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka in June 1972, I undertook a more organized field trip and thereafter visited Ohafia frequently whenever I was able to do so. But my most important field work was done in March and April 1976, and in the long vacation of 1977. It was in the course of these two trips that I was able to investigate the tastes of the members of the society as described in section 9.2 of Chapter 9 and defined the traditional criteria of evaluation on which is based the socio-literary approach of the present thesis.

Six singers on the whole were recorded: Kaalu Igirigiri Okon (poet B), Egwu Kaalu of Asaga (Poet C), Ogbaa Kaalu of Abia (Poet D), Echeme Ogwo of Ebem (Poet E), and Njoku Mmaju of Uduma Awoke (Poet F). The alphabet codes attached to the names of the poets refer to the chronological order in which I came in contact with them. I met first Kaalu Igirigiri in December 1970, although I did not record his songs then; I met him again in April 1971, and it was then that I first recorded him alongside Egwu Kaalu whom I met for the first time then. I met Ogbaa Kaalu for the first time outside Ohafia (at Akara, Isuikwuato, where he is a native medical practitioner) in April 1976, but I was not able to record him myself. This was done in June of that year by my brother, Ndubuisi Azuonye, his next-door neighbour at Akara. The other two singers, I met and recorded for the first time in July 1977.

The only poet I was not able to meet - because he died in 1966 before I even became aware of the songs - is

Poet A (Okonkwo Oke of Akaanu). I was however able to get a copy of three of his songs recorded by Chijioke Abagwe, from Mr. and Mrs. Ukpai Emele in London in 1976. This notwithstanding, I have assigned the code 'A' to this singer so as to maintain a consistent chronological sequence in the coding of versions of various tales by individual singers (see key to the Abbreviations).

When I embarked on serious collection of texts in June 1972, I considered the rather attractive option of recording on the traditional festive and ritual occasions on which the songs feature (see sections 2.2.4 and 2.4.5. of Chapter 2). But this proved difficult to manage on two counts. First, one needed to keep a diary of calendar-festivals and to keep a constant watch on the field for celebrations of various kinds. The practical difficulty of doing either of these need not be overstressed, especially during the years (1976-78) when field work had to be done from the United Kingdom. Another problem had to do with the quality of tape-recordings actually made on such occasions. One could not possibly isolate various back-ground noises which might render the words of the singer inaudible.

The advantage of recording in pre-arranged and controlled sessions thus proved far more rewarding than any gains that might have accrued from recording in the traditional ritual and social occasions. To begin with, pre-arranged sessions put the singer on his best behaviour as an artist

and forced him to put aside some of the bacchanalian excesses - sometimes drunken excesses - that were inevitably conduced by the atmosphere of gaiety that surrounds festive occasions. Secondly, it was easier to eliminate unnecessary background noises and to limit the musical accompaniment (see Chapter 2, section 2.4.5) to the barest and essential minimum, in order to focus attention on the words. On a number of occasions, greater clarity was achieved by separating the singer from the musicians, but making sure that he was not too far isolated to hear and respond to the rhythm of the music. Poet B (Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon) agreed several times to this arrangement (in July 1972, March-April 1976 and July 1977) and did not regard it either as disabling in any way or as a violation of tradition.

Recordings were made both on reel tapes and on cassettes. In the case of the former, it was always necessary to use two tape-recorders so as to ensure continuity, for it proved, after a few initial errors in 1971, that one could not stop the singer half way to change a tape and still get a continuation of the tale or invocation stopped half-way. Once a singer was forced to stop half-way, he abandoned the version of the song in the making and began a new version altogether. This practice is of course in sharp contrast with the practice of the singers of the long monumental epics, who could always continue with the same tale after medial rest-periods

of varying durations (see, for example, Clark, 1977). But on account of what we shall discover to be their compact brevity and tendency towards non-digressional and non-elaborative structural unity, any such rest in the performance of the Ohafia narratives is intolerable, and could not but give rise to disjointed and incomprehensible pieces of narrative.

At the initial stages of my field work, my first impulse after making a recording was to seek the assistance of the singer himself in the transcription of the texts.[18] This, I considered was the best way of obtaining accurate transcriptions. But this proved to be a mistake and I soon abandoned the procedure. It turned out that the singer saw the transcription exercise - not as an effort to put down accurately the words of a previously recorded text - but as an opportunity to create a new version of the tale. Rather than give the actual words heard from the tapes, the singer dictated new lines and even verses and paragraphs. Unfortunately, I did not at the time realize the significance of these changes and even went so far as to destroy the evidence in exasperation. But it is worth repeating sometime in the future as a totally new line of research, an approach which might provide further perspectives on the nature of the creative process in the art of the Ohafia singers.

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18. The transcription uses the Official orthography (1961) discussed in Green and Igwe, 1963: 1-3.

Be that as it may, there was one good reason for not encouraging the improvisations made by the singers while helping in transcription, and that is - apart from the sheer waste of time entailed - the fact that one could easily lose the version on tape if one accepted the author's improvisations as a true rendering of the actual words on the tape.

The reason why it was necessary in the first place to seek the aid of the singer was to be able to wade through the problems posed not only by largely unfamiliar borderland dialect, but also by the highly allusive epithets in the songs. Many Ohafia indigenes did not fare better as aids in transcription. One recruited at Enugu in 1978, did no more than produce standard Igbo versions of the texts - the kind of compromise Igbo spoken in urban towns - rather than the true dialect of the texts. For him, the transcription exercise turned out to be a way of helping me (an outsider to the Ohafia culture living as far away as England) to understand the dialect by having it transliterated into the common urban Igbo.

It proved in the end that the best way of obtaining accurate transcriptions was to do so myself, but with the aid of indigenes who understood the need for keeping the dialect as spoken by the singers. Many assistants of this type (mainly secondary school students, primary school teachers and one of my students at Ibadan, Mr.O.U. Ojo) were able in the end to transcribe the texts by themselves and to take the

initiative referred to in section 6.1 of Chapter 6, of transcribing breath-groups of words as lines of verse.

The total number of texts transcribed so far is seventy-four and these are listed in Appendix II and form the basis of the present study. But these represent only a tiny fraction of the total number of texts actually recorded during the last eight years. There are probably hundreds of them contained in over two hundred 45-minute cassette tapes and fifteen six-inch reel tapes. But to wait for all these to be transcribed would have entailed waiting indefinitely before even beginning my work on this thesis. The recordings are still being transcribed and will form the basis for future research, especially in the area of the creative role of individual singers through the comparison of variant texts.

The need for textual support for the discussion of the creative role of individual singers, in Chapter 8, is the main basis for the selection of the illustrative examples of the texts presented in Appendix I. The five variant versions of 'Nne Mgbaafo' illustrate the discussion of creative variations by different singers of the same tales; and other variant texts illustrate the patterns of creative variation wrought by the same singer (the most prolific of the singers, Kaalu Igirigiri) in his renderings of the same tales in different contexts and periods of time. Other texts have been included mainly to illustrate specific features of

the songs to which special attention has been drawn in the analysis.

The translations provided are intended to keep as close as possible to the original Igbo, but wherever this resulted either in some kind of obscurity or flaccidness not present in the Igbo, a free translation of the implication of the line or lines has been given in lieu of a close rendering of the Igbo. But even these are tentative, as a comprehensive critical edition of the texts, intended ultimately to be published in book form, is in progress.

PART I

BACKGROUND AND CONTENT

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND

1.1. INTRODUCTION[1]

Ohafia is one of the numerous small confederations of autonomous village-groups[2] in Igbo country (Map 1); with an estimated population of 100,000 inhabitants[3], it is located immediately west of the Cross River, on what has been described as a 'hoe-shaped' ridge, part of the southern terminus of the great plateau and escarpment which traverses south-eastern Nigeria from north to south (Map 2). This territory covers an area of approximately 110 square miles. Its main vegetation cover is 'orchard-bush' forest, i,e, a mixture of savanna grassland and tropical rain forest; but looking out into the open landscape, one can see some large groves of big trees. According to Nsugbe (1974:5), this suggests that "before the effects of shifting cultivation and erosion from slope-farming combined with the pressure of population, high forest may have been extensive over the ridge". Be that as it may, the forests still harbour enough wild life[4] to make hunting an occupation of no less significance, in the community today, than peasant farming and subsistence trading.

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1. Apart from on-the-spot observations in the field, the data contained in this section derive mainly from Forde and Jones (1950), Floyd (1969), and Nsugbe (1974).

2. The term "Confederation of autonomous village-groups" is used here after Ottenberg (1971:67). There are altogether 25 village-groups in the Ohafia confederation. See Map 4 and note 11 below.

3. This is based on the disputed census figures of 1973. Nsugbe takes a "conservative estimate of 65,000 to be the population of Ohafia in the 1960s" (1974:11).

4. This includes the leopard, bush-hog, antelope, deer, bush-fowl, cane-rat, squirrel, bush-rat and bat. These animals - especially the leopard, the bush-hog and the antelope - figure prominently in the allegorical and parabolic fables as characters.

In relation to most other Igbo communities (including immediate neighbours with which it is generally grouped together, in recent ethnographic sources, as the 'Cross River Igbo'[5]), Ohafia is a highly isolated community. Its only reliable link with the Igbo heartland is a tarred but dilapidated road which runs along the ridge from Umuahia-Ibeku, on the Enugu-Port Harcourt Railway, to the town of Aro-Chuku in the Igbo-Ibibio borderland. Not long ago, before the construction of this road[6], Ohafia's isolation was complete. In the north and west, it was cut off from other Igbo areas by high forests and narrow, steep-sided valleys, and, in the south and east, it fronted the territories of the non-Igbo Ibibio and Ogoja peoples of the Cross River State.

What is significant about this geographical isolation is not just the fact that Ohafia was difficult of access from most directions in the Igbo heartland; far more significant was that, for several generations after the first Igbo immi-

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5. Alternatively 'Eastern Igbo', this major grouping of the Igbo, in Forde and Jones (1950:51-56), includes fourteen communities which are not only located close to the non-Igbo Ibibio and Ogaja peoples of the Cross River state but also share many cultural features in common with them. According to Forde and Jones, their "kinship system, men's associations and cults indicate that, apart from language, non-Ibo elements predominate in some groups, especially the Ada and Abam. Age-sets are more highly developed than among other Ibo and, among the Ada but not the Abam, are associated with elaborate initiation rituals" (Ibid:52). Ada and Abam are two of three main cultural groupings into which the Cross River Igbo groups have been classified by Forde and Jones. The third is Aro, the group which occupies the town of Aro-Chuku in the extreme south-eastern corner of the Cross River Igbo territory (Map 3). The Ada and the Abam, for their part, occupy the northern and central parts of the territory respectively. Ohafia is one of six large communities which constitute the Abam cultural grouping.

6. The Umuahia-Ohafia-Arochuku Road was constructed between 1961 and 1962.

grants settled there (See 1.2.1 below), it remained much more easily accessible from the territories of its alien and hostile neighbours.

The difficulty posed by the thickly-forested Cross River valley to the east and low-lying swampy country to the south was easy to surmount once the Cross River had been reached; from there, it was relatively easy to row across to Ohafia. In the north and west, on the other hand, the only access route was the crest of the ridge along which the tarred road (above) runs; but the difficulty with this ancient route, used extensively in the past by Igbo and non-Igbo peoples alike was that "it ran roughly from north to south, like the Cross River, away from the heart of Iboland"[7], thus further isolating the Ohafia people and creating a front of contact, and consequently of conflict, between them and their hostile neighbours. This geographical situation is perhaps the most important factor behind the evolution of the historical, social and cultural environment, out of which sprang heroic poetry, manifested in the songs studied in this thesis.

1.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS[8]

By far the most important consequence of Ohafia's isolation among the non-Igbo groups of the Cross River area

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7. The quotation is from Nsugbe, 1974:3.

8. The historical information contained in this section has been pieced together from a wide range of sources: Partridge (1905), Leonard (1906), Tremearne (1916), Basden (1921, 1938), Talbot (1926), Burns (1929), Lumley (1930), Cowan (1935), McFarlan (1946), Ojike (1946), Dike (1956), Afigbo (1965, 1972a, 1972b), Floyd (1969), Ekejiuba (1972a, 1972b), Henderson (1972), Uka (1972), Latham (1973), Isichei (1973 and 1976), and Dike and Ekejiuba (1976, 1978).

was its emergence, in the course of time, as one of the most warlike groups in Igboland, a power feared far and wide, throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, and even into the present century, on account of the aggressive head-hunting propensity of its members. This section deals with the most important stages in this development, especially those which we shall see reflected in the content of the songs (Chapter 4).

1.2.1 Origins, Migrations and Settlement Patterns

The Ohafia have a tradition that their founding fathers migrated to their present homeland in the Cross River region from Ibeku, a central Igbo community which includes the railway town of Umuahia[9]. According to the tradition, they settled first at Elu (lit. Hill-top), a village-group on the crest of the ridge, which is still regarded by the members of all other village-groups in Ohafia as the main centre of their religious and social life (see Map 4).

The original settlement at Elu is a typical example of the kind of strategic hill-top location generally preferred by migrant groups in the early period of Igbo

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9 This tradition is the subject of oneof the texts in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.1). This traces the origins of the founding fathers further back to the ancient kingdom of Benin and asserts a recent tradition that the Igbo are descended from the Hebrew. But as indicated in the comments in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2), these extensions of the tradition are less credible than the core tradition of Ibeku origins. The credibility of the latter is strengthened by the fact that the Ibeku have a similar tradition about Ohafia origins and maintain fraternal relations with the Ohafia (see Nsugbe, 1974: 15-18). By contrast, the myth of Bini and Hebrew origins seems more like the universal tendency to use heroic poetry to claim noble ancestry or relationship with great civilizations of the past. In fact, the idea that the Igbo are descendants of the Hebrew is probably based on the identity of sound between Ibo (the Anglicized form of the name Igbo) and Hebrew.

history:[10] defended in all directions by high forests and steep valleys, the location also offered a clear view of the surrounding plains just as it still does today. But this relative security was soon cut short when the pressure of population forced a new wave of migrations, this time short-distance emigrations.

As a result of these emigrations, eight new settlements were formed in the plains and ridges around the original settlement at Elu. These were: the Ama-Ekpu village-group, to the north, on the main ridge; Ebem, to the south, also on the main ridge; and to the west, in the outlying plains and lower ridges, the village-groups of Nkwo-Ebi, Nde-a-Nku, Okagwe, Nde-Uduma-Ukwu, and Oboro.

Today, these eight secondary settlements are regarded by all Ohafia people as constituting an inner core of senior village-groups known as Ọha-Ẹke (see Nsugbe, 1974: 34-35, 59, 65), and as is customary among the Igbo generally, the seniority of these groups entitles their members to weild special ritual and political powers and to enjoy privileges denied the members of seventeen other village-groups whose

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10. On strategic hill-top locations in the early period of Igbo history, the historical geographer, Floyd (1969:46), writes as follows: "Hill-top defensive locations for villages and the protective environs of dissected plateau country or high plains are to be found in most areas of Eastern Nigeria where medium to high densities of population exist today .... By contrast, the open and flat countryside of the upper Cross River region (Abakaliki and Western Ogoja provinces) offered no natural protection for its inhabitants, and their subduing by the Aro-Abam fraternity was made easier because of it".

ancestors are said to have come much later.[11]

1.2.2. Early Contacts and Conflict with Aboriginal Non-Igbo Groups

The arrival of new Igbo immigrants in the wake of the expansion of the early settlers from Elu helped to set the stage for increased contact and hence conflict with the aboriginal non-Igbo elements, some of whom had been displaced from their land[12]. But these conflicts were not limited to the Igbo and non-Igbo groups. As Ohafia traditions suggest, the Oha-Eke and the later immigrants also fought against one another, usually over rights to farm-land and access to the palm-trees growing wild in the forests. But, it would appear that in the course of time, they came to the realization that their petty quarrels only served to weaken

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11. Nsugbe explains: "What appears at first sight to be the evidence of 'dual organization' in the grouping of Ohaffia local units involves certain units, eight in number, which call themselves the Ohaèke. These villages each have the special right to run a powerful political and administrative body of their own, called Umùàkà. This right is denied the remaining seventeen villages which, however, do not recognize themselves as a group, nor act as one in opposition to the Ohaeke villages. On the contrary, they tend to accept as a matter of course the superior status of the Ohaeke villages ... The free-born members of each of the eight Ohaeke villages refer to themselves as the àmadi ('notables' or 'true sons') of Ohaffa (Nsugbe, 1974: 34-35). A similar recognition is accorded these villages (actually village-groups) in the catalogues of heroes and lineages, in the songs. See 3.2.4 below, and also the lists of heroes in Arnoogu (Texts 35 - 41*).

12. In a recent article on the evolution of the Aro Igbo state, Dike and Ekejiuba have put forward the following corroborative argument, in which they identify the displaced aboriginal elements as comprising the Ibibio and an autochthonous group of probably Ogoja stock: "It would appear," they write, "that the Ibibio were relatively peacefully integrated with the autochthones, because of the interdependence of their economies and the affinities of their cultures. Conflict therefore appeared less a feature of the Ibibio expansion than of the succeeding Igbo movements in the region ..... The arrival of Igbo groups intensified conflicts, and made intergroup relationships between the different swidden agriculturalists more complex (1978:273).

them against their common enemy, the non-Igbo Ibibio and Ogoja peoples. In traditions passed down from generation to generation, among these peoples, all Igbo groups were portrayed as land-grabbers, and the young were reminded of their duty to retake all the stolen lands or at least render them unsafe for human habitation. This resulted in the kind of resistance which early European settlers in North America and Australasia met from the aboriginal elements there.

The analogy here with North America and Australasia is by no means far-fetched, for like the American Indians and the Australasian aborigines, in the wake of European incursions into their territories, the original non-Igbo inhabitants of the Cross River region seem to have been provoked, by successive Igbo intrusions into their lands, to "take to war as a normal routine", in an albeit fruitless effort to keep the enemy at bay. With the prolongation of this pattern of confrontation over several generations, an "heroic age" (see Bowra, 1957) inevitably dawned in the area.

The "heroic age" is usually thought of as belonging more to legend[13] than to recorded history, but as Bowra (1957) has shown, it is in fact a universal feature of

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13. On this conception of the "heroic age", Bowra (1957:1) writes: "Many peoples cherish the legend of an age which, in the splendour and scope of its achievements and in the prodigious qualities of the men who took part in them, is thought to eclipse all that comes after it. For the Greeks this was the age of heroes, and though the word ἥρως originally meant no more than 'Warrior', it soon assumed more august associations and implied a special superiority in human endowments and endeavours". Bowra further remarks that "A similar notion is to be found in a number of other peoples, and though it appears in different forms it remains fundamentally the same". This applies very well to the Ohafia people, among whom, the term, nde-ikike (strong ones) has over the years assumed the same connotations as 'hero' in the idiom of heroic poetry.

recorded human history[14]. Characterized by the fostering of a generation of men for whom the winning of honour in war or single-combat is the chief aim of Life, the heroic age is essentially the result of prolonged exposure to what Kunene (1971) describes as "conditions of life which constitute an ever-present challenge to the valour of men", namely:

(a) frequent wars, battles, and skirmishes;

(b) frequent encounters with wild beasts, as in hunting;

(c) frequent hunting expeditions;

(d) frequent cattle raids; and

(e) generally, the presence of any source of danger to life and property; as, for instance, the prevalence of cannibalism (1971:3-4).

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14. Bowra (1957:11) sees the need to make a distinction between "a truly heroic society, and other societies which give much time and attention to war". This distinction, he writes, "turns on the vastly increased attention paid to war, the energy and enterprise thrown into it, and the special outlook which it promotes". He then cites three cases, the first and third of which are exact parallels of the situation that developed in the Cross River area: "In some cases this intensification of a military ideal is due simply to the need for survival in lands where subsistence is never easy and conquests become a necessity; in other cases, as with the Achaeans and the Huns, the perfecting of a military system and the adoption of new weapons or tactics open up prospects of living more luxuriously and more easily by predatory methods at the expense of richer and more established societies; in still other cases, as in Wales, a people, which has been used to peaceful ways, is driven by foreign invadors to take to war as a normal routine". Floyd (1969:46) refers to aspects of these three typical situations in his comment on the need for "defensible sites for villages" in the early history of Eastern Nigeria: "the cardinal considerations in the selection of areas for settlement were that they should contain defensible sites for villages and that they should offer land of sufficient size and quality to provide adequate sustenance for the group. The constant threat of attack from militant or revenge-seeking alien tribesmen, hungry neighbours whose crops failed, or slave-raiding parties, was an inescapable reality of life up to the beginning of this century".

Conditions of this kind prevailed in the Cross River area before and about the time of the arrival of the Ohafia people; the only difference was that in the absence of pastoral life in this thickly forested area, the place of cattle-raids was taken by raids into the farms and palm-tree groves of one group by its neighbours.[15] Such raids were usually occasioned by drought, seasonal hunger, or the failure of crops; but they were also among the conventional ways in which men asserted their manhood, in the heroic age. But by far the most important way of asserting one's manhood was by risking death in order to ward off the attacks of hostile neighbours and wild animals on the community to which one belonged.

Among the wild animals encountered by the honour-seeking men of the heroic age, leopards and bush-hogs were the most formidable. While bush-hogs ravaged farm-crops

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15. This is consonant with Parry's observation (1933:1-2) that "poetry is heroic only because it is created by people who are living in a certain way and have a certain outlook on life, and our understanding of the heroic will come only as we learn what that way of living is, and grasp that outlook. We find, for example, that cattle-lifting is a common theme in ancient European poetries, but it is found there because of no law of poetry, but because these peoples happened to live in a way which led them to the stealing of cattle on the one hand and to the practice of poetry on the other. It may seem far-fetched to say that any one has gone so far as to suppose a law of poetry which makes a common theme at a certain stage in the growth of poetry, and which results in reaving, but still that is implied by those who study the heroic element in early poetry as primarily a literary problem. Its proper study is even more anthropological and historical, and what Doughty tells us about cattle-lifting among the Bedouins is more enlightening, if we are reading Nestor's tale of a cattle raid into Elis, than is the mere knowledge that the theme occurs elsewhere in ancient poetry." Hatto seems to be arguing from the opposite perspective, with regards to cattle-raids in Bahima heroic recitations, in his Foreword to Morris (1964: v-xii).

from time to time, the peace and happiness of the community was frequently shattered when leopards swooped upon homesteads seizing and devouring livestock and men. Stories of such attacks and of the determined efforts by the community as a whole and of individual heroes to combat them, constitute one of the major features of the oral historical traditions of the peoples of the Cross River area.

The high incidence of warfare in the heroic age, as reflected in Cross River historical traditions, was not only due to the quest by various groups for new territory or for the recovery of lost lands; the causes were partly religious as well. First of all, many of the powerful deities worshipped by the Cross River peoples demanded human sacrifice constantly from their votaries; secondly, it was customary to bury the great chiefs of that epoch with numerous live captives, in the belief that they needed to be accompanied by a large retinue of slaves so that their identity would not be mistaken in the spirit world. In response to these religious calls, warriors raiding neighbouring areas not only sought the heads of their victims; they also sought ways and means of taking them home alive.

In this kind of situation, every community preyed on its neighbours, and each institutionalized head-hunting as a practical as well as a psychological means of ensuring its own defence.

The essence of head-hunting, as it has been practised over the centuries in various heroic ages all over the world,[16]

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16. For a discussion of the practice of head-hunting in the Myceneaen and Germanic heroic ages, see Murray (1907: 128-129) and Chadwick (1932-40, Vol.i: 92-94).

is that it assures the community whose members indulge in it that there is always available in its ranks, a substantial reserve of able-bodied men, who have proved their battle-worthiness by challenging an alien single-handedly, over-powering him and bringing his head home as a proof of this achievement. In a community surrounded by hostile forces, the value of this kind of proof was immeasurable. It was not only a proof of battle-worthiness, it was also a way of dissipating the forces of the enemy. Indeed, the very fact that the members of a particular society scored frequent successes in taking the heads of the enemy was enough to deter him from venturing into their domains.[17]

1.2.3 Head-hunting and the Development of an Heroic Ethos in Ohafia

With the development of head-hunting, an heroic ethos evolved in Ohafia.[18] The society came to make a distinction between two classes of men. The first of these, ufiem, consisted of men who had proved their manhood by procuring heads in encounters with the enemy; it also included those, who served the society in times of trouble by destroying dangerous animals or raiding neighbouring areas for food. The second class of men was known as ụjọ̄: this consisted of cowardly and dishonourable men who shirked their respon-

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17. The deterrent value of possessing evidence of frequent successes in head-hunting, in the heroic age, is somewhat comparable to the nuclear deterrent in international relations today.

18. The head-hunting practice of the Ohafia is not only similar to that of the Ibibio described in Talbot (1926: Chapter XVII), its provenance also fits into the general pattern of historical evolution whereby head-hunting begets head-hunting. We are told in Tremearne, for example, that the Kajji people of the non-Islamic belt of Central Nigeria, took up head-hunting only because their neighbours, the Kagoro, practised it on them (1916: 185).

sibility to the society by failing to risk their lives in its service. The inaction of such men created huge gaps in the defence of the land, giving the enemy the respite he needed to increase his attacks.

The institutionalization of the distinction between these two classes of men was essential because it enabled the society to operate a system of rewards and punishment by means of which it succeeded in a remarkable way in holding members of its younger generations from deviating from the established heroic norm. For the ufiem (the honourable warriors),[19] the door was open for the enjoyment of all the material benefits and privileges the society could offer: they alone could wear the ọ̀kàrà cloth and other traditional status symbols such as eagle plumes and the red tail-feathers of the parrot:[20] they alone were free to marry whoever they chose to marry and to go about their daily business without molestation; finally, they alone could qualify for admission into the prestigious secret societies in the community.

By contrast to the life of the ufiem, the life of the ụjọ̄ (the dishonourable cowards) consisted of a series of humiliations. From time to time, the members of their age-grade would raid their homes and barns and seize their property and yams to share with impunity among themselves. Wherever they went, they were greeted with insolent mock-heroic titles, even by children and slaves. In many cases,

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19. This and the subsequent rendering of the term, ụjọ̄, are the nearest we can go in finding English equivalents of the Ohafia terms.

20. The ọ̀kàrà cloth, also known as 'George', is a status symbol all over Igbo land. It is usually striped and woven of an admixture of silk and cotton. Originally imported from India, it is now made and imported in large quantities from Manchester. A man wearing an ọ̀kàrà cloth and a cap decorated with eagle feathers and the red-tail feathers of a parrot is generally regarded as rich and respectable.

they were not even allowed to get married; but if they got married by any chance, their wives bore the brunt of their degradation. Such unfortunate women were generally obliged always to dress themselves as mourners and to wear their hair short. If they put on any beautiful dresses or ornaments, they were quickly arrested by the wives of the honourable warriors and stripped naked in public. Naturally, many women could not put up with this daily routine of shameful living and simply absconded. But, as tradition has it, some women of the heroic age, were so brave and so deeply in love with their husbands that they took up their cause and actually went to the wars to procure heads on their behalf.[21] But such Amazonian women were rare indeed; the onus in the heroic age was always that of the man to act, unless he totally lacked the sense of shame.

Stringent social pressures of this kind gave rise to a highly competitive and individualistic society.[22] Young men vied with one another for the numerous positions of honour with which their generation rewarded every display of manly prowess. In the circumstances, they came to see every war - any war - no matter who the combatants were or what the quarrel was, as their own war. In the generations to come, especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, they went in search of war to almost every part of Igboland, including the border areas of Nsukka and Anambra in the north-east. They went as individuals, in small bands of a handful of men, and as huge armies levied by the war-chiefs of the twenty-five village-

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21. See Nne Mgbaafo B1 and B2, and Inyan Olugu B1 and B2, in Appendix I (Texts 28-29* and 22-23* respectively).

22. Cp Bowra (1957:8): "heroic ages, as we know them from history represent a crucial and dramatic stage in the emergence of the individual from the mass."

groups.[23]

1.2.4 18th and 19th Century Developments

The spread of the warlike and head-hunting activities of the Ohafia people to other parts of Igbo country, in the 18th and 19th centuries, was accelerated by their contacts with the Aro, an ambitious and powerful group, whose founding fathers apparently arrived much later in the Cross River area than other Cross River Igbo, settling in a small strip of territory, now the town of Aro-Chukwu, to the south-east of Ohafia.

The early history of the Aro was probably much the same as that of Ohafia. That they got embroiled in constant warfare with their neighbours is well-attested to by their traditions. But while developing a head-hunting culture in response to this situation, their chief cultural attainments tended to be more religious, political and commercial than military. From the Ibibio autochthones of their newly-acquired territory, they adopted the deity, Ùkpâbì or Ùkpâbì Okòn and renamed it Obìni Ùkpâbì or Chukwu Ùkpâbì Okòn, combining in their conception of it the Igbo idea of a supreme power of life which pervades the universe (i.e. Chi ukwu) and the Ibibio notion of the supreme deity (Àbàsì) as a

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23. Ohafia traditions claim that it was the custom for each of the twenty-five village-groups to contribute a 'battalion' of àbuō-adīghi-ya-na-nnū-àbò, i.e. 'two short of four hundred (nnù) times two', or 798 men. This would suggest a large army of 19,950 men each time Ohafia was involved in a serious military confrontation with a rival power. The accuracy and significance of this figure are a matter for further research. For our present purposes, it would seem fair to assume that the figure refers to the largeness of the armies which the war-chiefs could levy at short notice and the factor of an established system of mobilization which the society had developed.

thunder-wielding power that lives in the sky.[24] In the course of time, Obìni-Ùkpâbì, later known as the Long Juju, developed into a great oracle whose mysteries were known throughout south-eastern Nigeria, and whose help was sought by many in the area.

The development of the Obìni-Ùkpâbi oracle was accompanied by the stratification of the Aro society into four functional classes - the Priestly Aro (Arù Àkpà), the Warrior Aro (Arù Ahā), the Trading Aro (Arù Avīa) and the Farming Aro (Arù Àlì). The Priestly Aro, who ministered to the Oracle, were responsible for the propagation of the belief that it was the only earthly seat of the supreme deity and that it had the power to solve all human problems. As agents, in the faraway lands where their influence eventually extended, they employed the Trading Aro, most of whom were not traders at all, but spies operating in the guise of traders. Through this uncanny system of intelligence and communication, they succeeded in winning many votaries and encouraging them to make pilgrimages to Aro-Chuku. Many did. Large fees were exacted from them, and soon the Aro became one of the richest of the indigenous hegemonies of pre-colonial West Africa.

Aro prosperity was further boosted in the late 18th and early 19th centuries by the escalation of the slave trade in the Bights of Benin and Biafra. Quick to recognize

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24. This is based on traditions recorded in 1967 from Chiefs Kanu Okoroji and Okoroafo Uwa Nwangoro, at Aro-Chuku. These traditions formed the basis of a five-part radio talk which I broadcast over the Voice of Biafra early in 1968. The texts of the talk and the broadcast tape-recordings are available in the Archives of the Anambra and Imo States' Broadcasting Services, at Enugu and Owerri, respectively.

the long-term benefits of the trade, the Priestly Aro gradually turned their famous oracle into one of the uncanniest devices ever employed in the collection of human cargoes throughout the history of the Atlantic slave trade. From time to time they issued decrees demanding human sacrifice from their votaries. These were readily supplied, especially by powerful chiefs who frequently sought the aid of the great oracle against their enemies. The victims were led through a dark,labyrinthine tunnel to a secret depot in the woods, where they were bound and then transported to the coastal slave markets. At a diversionary exit from the tunnel, a shallow pool that led into the forest was coloured with the blood of a goat to create the impression that the victim had actually been sacrificed.

In the course of time, this manner of obtaining slaves proved both inadequate and needlessly expensive to meet the increasing demands of European traffickers on the coast. Moreover, as their power and influence grew, the Aro nursed colonial ambitions. War became necessary in many cases. It was in the scheming and actual conduct of such wars that the Warrior Aro functioned. But in spite of their name, the Warrior Aro were not a class of fighting men. They were more of military strategists or war chiefs. They were however aware, through proximity and earlier contacts on the ridge, of the Ohafia people's addiction to head-hunting. They knew how easy it would be to secure their services to fight their wars for them. If the people already had a habit of seeking adventure in wars without material benefit, it was much easier to persuade them to undertake such adventure if

it was made safer and more profitable by the supply of sophisticated weapons and imported European goods. Following these considerations, the Warrior Aro eventually concluded a 'blood-pact' known as ùkwùzì with the Ohafia and other warlike groups in the Cross River area. Dr. Uka describes this pact as a contract:

> Under this contract, the Aro were to seek out territories to be attacked and report to the Ohafia and Abam people, who were only out for heads. Any town, therefore, having a dispute with one another, and wishing to wreak a summary vengeance on it, would apply, through Aro agents, for a force of Ohafia and Abam warriors (1972:79).

Because of the contractual nature of this alliance, the Ohafia and other warlike groups of the Cross River area have for long been regarded by historians as "mercenaries" who merely served Aro interests for pay. But, as we can see from the above discussion, the historical and social situation in which these groups found themselves was such that they could not afford to sacrifice the sustaining heroic idealism of their culture for the ordinary material benefits of life. Refuting the traditional charge of mercenarism against the Ohafia, in her recently published history of the Igbo-speaking people, Dr. Elizabeth Isichei argues that

> the substantial tribute offered by groups requesting their services was used in the religious ceremonies which preceded wars. The Ohafia sought only the concrete symbol of military prowess - human heads (1976:82).

Seen in its proper perspective, then, the ùkwùzì contract between the Ohafia and the Aro involved a relationship of mutual exploitation. While the Aro regarded themselves as the sole beneficiaries because it enabled them to acquire new territories and slaves without risking the lives of their own people, the Ohafia saw it as an arrangement

under which they were paid to undertake adventures they would ordinarily have pursued without any payment. As long as the two parties saw it in this light, the contract survived. But it soon became obvious to the Ohafia that their Aro allies were involved in clandestine and unscrupulous breaches of the pact. They were not content with seizing refugees lost in battle and selling them into slavery with the war captives, they also meted out this treatment on many occasions to Ohafia warriors whom they found lost in unknown territory. This disregard of fair play on the part of the Aro was destined to bring the whole ukwuzi arrangement into disrepute, provoking their allies to engage in their own flagrant display of bad faith.

By the time of the British intervention, at the beginning of the present century, the Ohafia, as we have already noted, had fought in almost every part of Igbo land. However, their principal enemies remained their immediate non-Igbo neighbours: the Ibibio and the Ogoja. While they raided other Igbo areas merely for the love of military glory, their wars with these neighbouring groups continued to be a struggle for survival.

1.3 SOCIAL ORGANIZATION[25]

In more than two centuries of constant involvement in heroic warfare, structures emerged in the Ohafia social organization which served to promote the people's warlike preoccupations and to sustain the heroic mode of life. This section is confined to three such structures which seem most relevant to the discussion of the songs. The first of these

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25. The information contained in this section derives mainly from Goody (1961), Ottenberg (1963), Forde & Jones (1950), Uka (1972) & Nsugbe (1974).

is a double-descent system of kinship relationships in which women controlled agriculture and the transmission of agrarian land while men defended the homestead and controlled the transmission of residential estates (1.3.1). The second involves the compact arrangement of wards of residential estates within villages in the form of military garrisons, for defensive purposes, and the linking together of wards within various villages and of the villages themselves within village-groups, by paths radiating from common centres for the purposes of rapid mobilization in times of war (1.3.2). The third is the organization of members of the society into age-grades for various military and social functions, and the use of age-promotion ceremonies to emphasize the need for individuals to make notable contributions to the glory and welfare of the community at various stages of their lives (1.3.3).

1.3.1 The Double-Descent System of Social Organization

A double-descent system of social organization is one in which an individual can claim descent both from his father's people (his patrilineage) and his mother's people (his matrilineage); from each of these lineages, he expects to inherit certain specified types of property or rights. Nsugbe implies that one can trace the origins of this system of social organization in Ohafia to the conditions of the heroic age. "It is very likely," he writes, "that the need"

> for men to consolidate a new territory would involve them in constant warfare and therefore in the reallocation of responsibilities by transferring farm work to the women. The longer this need persisted, the likelier this expedient for survival would become a routine way of living (1974:21).

It did become a routine way of living. After so many generations of controlling farm land, women became the sole transmitters of the right of its ownership. But residence remained patrilocal, and as the men continued to act as defenders of the homestead and winners of titles, residential property and titles passed from them to their sons. The resultant lineage structures are described by the Ohafia people as ikwu (matrilineage) and umūdi (patrilineage).[26]

1.3.1.1. The Matrilineages

In the Ohafia system, matrilineal groups are not local units. Their members cohere through matrilineage associations which meet periodically for the discussion of affairs of mutual interest and for celebrations. These associations operate under the leadership of two heads - a ritual head, who must be a woman, and a secular head, who must be a man. The responsibility of the ritual head, who is described as a queen-mother, is to make sacrifices to a group of sacred

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26. An important feature of the Ohafia double-descent system, reflected in the title of Nsugbe's work, Ohafia: A Matrilineal Ibo People, is the dominance of the matrilineage over the patrilineage: "Not only is the Ohaffia matrilineage the main property-owning and inheriting group, it is also the only exogamous group; the patrilineage is non-exogamous and not the main property-owning or property-inheriting group" (1974: 121). Nsugbe also points out a number of pshycho-logical reasons why the matrilineage is the dominant group in the system. He refers to a number of common sayings among the people which express their belief that the only bond anyone can assert with certainty is the bond of otū-afō (same womb). He then concludes by stating that if "the Ohaffia descent system is to be classified as one of double descent, it must also be made clear that matrilineal elements are dominant in the system" (121). I draw attention to this strong matrilineal tendency, because, as we shall see in the texts of the war songs, warriors tend to be identified more as sons of their mothers than of their fathers, and they generally tend to be more attached to their matriclans than to their patriclans. See 4.6.2. below.

pots, which are traditionally accumulated to represent the ancestresses of the lineage. The secular head, on the other hand, is the sole legal officer of his matrilineage. He not only settles disputes among members, he also has the more important responsibility of protecting

> the rights and interests of members in the lands or estates and the resources of these; he appoints those who apportion matrilineal lands to members and others who need to use them over a period; it is he who permits the exploitation of plant and soil resources from their common estates, and protects these against abuse and selfish use (Nsugbe, 1974: 93).

1.3.1.2. The Patrilineages

As we have already noted, patrilineal groups, in the Ohafia system, are the only local units. Their members generally occupy a common territory, the village. Each village comprises a number of wards or residential districts which are linked together by a pattern of paths radiating from a common square. The wards themselves are made up of collections of the houses of members of various extended families. In each case, the houses are

> joined together to form a continuous wall enclosing a space usually filled by additional men's houses (Forde and Jones, 1950: 52).

These come under the head-ship of a ward-leader while the whole village comes under the head-ship of a non-hereditary chief.

Interestingly, the function of the village-head is limited to the management of relations between the village and other villages, both within and outside Ohafia. The actual government of the village is the responsibility of a democratically constituted assembly - a kind of house of commons - of which every adult member of the society is

qualified to be a member. This operates under the guidance of an advisory council of elders - a village senate - whose members wield enormous influence in the management of affairs, for

> among the Ibo generally, wisdom and knowledge of local traditions are associated with age (Nsugbe, 1974: 66).

Apart from the political and administrative structures described above, another important feature of the village and its component wards is the presence in their common meeting grounds of a number of objects and sanctuaries which are connected with local religious beliefs and practices. We noted above that the chief role of the ritual head of the matrilineage is to make sacrifices to a group of sacred pots, which represent the ancestresses of the lineage. Similar pots are accumulated in memory of the ancestors of the patrilineage in a mound located close to the central square of the village. In addition to these sacred ancestral pots, patrilineal ancestors are also represented by a special class of wooden images, which are enshrined in special halls of ancestral images (see 1.4.2 below). These halls are of two types: a small one, which constitutes the central meeting place of the members of the ward, and a big one, which is located close to the central square of the village and constitutes the meeting-place of the village assembly.

There are two other types of ritual objects in the central square of the village: one is the war drum, ikòrò, a slit-drum of great size used to summon the able-bodied members of the village in times of serious emergencies such as the outbreak of war; the other is the sanctuary of the tutelary deity of the village, and this is usually a god of war.

The military importance and cultural significance of these and other ritual structures in the ward and the village will be dealt with in some more detail in sections 1.3.2 and 1.4.2 respectively.

Beyond the village, there is no political arrangement of any significance in the Ohafia system. Villages which occupy a common territory constitute a village-group; but these are loose federations of people, whose ancestors, like those of the whole Ohafia confederation itself, chose to settle in the same geographical area, when the Oha-Eke groups emigrated from the original settlement of Elu, to found satellite settlements in the plains and valleys around the ridge (see section 1.2.1 above). The members of these village-groups are, however, united by two important kinds of cultural bonds: one is that they generally exhibit, and are widely recognised to possess, a distinctive communal character or spirit, often reflected in their names and patronymic titles;[27] the other is that they generally worship a common deity, again usually a war god, whose shrine can be seen in a central communal square connected to the central squares of all the component villages in the group by large radiating paths. The absence of significant genealogical or political links between the members of the village-group, is evidenced by the absence of any administrative council, or of sacred ancestral pots and images, at this level of social organization.

One might be led, from the foregoing account, to

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27. A typical example is Asaga (i.e. Asi aga - "Who says we should not pass"). This is a reference to the stereotypic image of the people as a community of fearless ones who prefer to venture into places where others fear to approach. See Elibe Aja Bl (Text 17: lines 43-47*) for a play on this image.

wonder where lies the basis of the unity of the twenty-five village-groups, as component members of the Ohafia confederation. By far the most important basis is the common historical experience of the people as described in the greater part of the foregoing pages. According to Nsugbe, the Ohafia people themselves

> say that the basis of their strong feeling of corporateness lies in their past history. They make the claim in their oral tradition that in the past their villages met, as they still do, when there was need to take decisions on matters that affected their general interest and which also called for urgent and concerted action. Drought, epidemic, external threat, or even the presence of man-eating or crop-destroying beasts were causes to make them meet as a community (1974: 34).

Another important cause was, and still is, religious: as a community, the people

> own a common tutelary deity, Ìkwan,[28] a war spirit, whose shrine with that of his wife, Òrìè,[29] is at Elu where the first migrant group settled (Nsugbe, 1974: 34).

1.3.2 Military Features of the Patrilineal Settlements

Throughout the foregoing section, I drew attention to the fact that most of the structures found in the patrilineal settlements, at all levels of their four-tier organization, are of some military significance and importance. I will now proceed to deal with the ways in which these structures actually functioned in times of war during the heroic age, paying particular attention to those aspects of these structures which I regard as most essential for a proper

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28. This is referred to in the songs as Oke Ìkwan.

29. Òrìè is also the name of the second day of the four day Igbo market week - Èke, Òrìè, Àfò, and Nkwọ. This goddess is presumably the patron deity of this holy day when no farm work is done anywhere in Ohafia.

visualization of actions and situations in those texts of the war songs which are set in the village.

The first thing to note is the compact arrangement of houses within the wards of various villages for the purposes of

> effective protection and defence against surprise attack (Nsugbe, 1974: 51)

We find a detailed explanation of this arrangement in Nsugbe:

> Now to take a closer look at the structure of the tertiary territorial unit (the ward), this, to start with, resembles the sector of a circle, and consists of unbroken rows of huts which run radially from the ogō (village-square) towards the bush behind. In between each paired rows of huts lies a path ... that leads straight into the ogō, emptying directly behind the appropriate 'rest-hut' ... of the (ward). The hind end of the path passes through the bush surrounding the primary unit. The bush separates one territorial unit from the next ...
>
> Access (to a ward) is possible from the ogō or from the bush end of the unit; it is hardly likely and sometimes impossible from any other direction. This means that once one finds oneself in the path one becomes effectively trapped, retreat being possible only by continuing in the direction of the ogō or by returning towards the bush. It can therefore be imagined that should the need to defend a village primary (or ward) arise, all that would need to be done would be to block the two ends of the path as one would a bridge.
>
> Doors open into the paths between the paired rows of huts. A first visitor (to an Ohafia ward) is bound to experience the disquieting feeling of being watched by scores of eyes from behind the interiors of huts on either side of him, unable to see them himself. For such a visitor, there might be the strong temptation to look over his shoulder now and again as if to assure himself that he is not being shadowed. The feeling is one of apprehension or of some danger coming as it were from all sides. Most primaries in Ohafia are structured this way, with the result that each such unit presents the appearance of a primitive military garrison with the surrounding bush serving as a 'moat'. The one essential purpose of this kind of residential structure is effective protection and defence against surprise attack. No foe would find it easy to extricate himself if trapped within such a maze of rows of huts (1974: 50-51).

In addition to offering effective defence against surprise attack, the ward also served as the primary level of military mobilization in times of war. The signal for war usually came from the central village-square. Here various age-sets kept rounds of watch over the village from an observation post on the top of a tall tree. As soon as any movement of enemy troops was sighted, the watchmen alerted those on the ground, who then alerted the whole village by beating the war drum. The signal would then be picked up by other watchmen in other villages. This process would continue until the whole of Ohafia was alerted. Because the war drum is generally a species of talking drum, it was generally possible to specify the exact nature of the danger for which the community was alerted and to state whether help was needed from other villages. In the event of a major war involving the whole of Ohafia, each ward-leader would normally assemble those members of his ward, who belonged to the particular age-grade responsible at the time for fighting on behalf of Ohafia, according to the established quota.[30] These would then assemble at the village square, proceeding from there to join forces with companies from other villages, in the central square of the village-group. The force thus assembled would then move to Elu, the traditional rendezvous for all the bands of warriors from all the twenty-five village-groups.

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30. See note 23 above.

1.3.3 Age-grades in the Military and Political Life of the Society[31]

I have already referred above to the fact that certain age-based grades within the Ohafia social system were responsible for the conduct of wars in the heroic age. Because there will be numerous references to these grades and to the sets that make them up in our examination of the texts of the war songs, it is necessary here to give some idea of exactly how they were constituted and the manner in which they actually functioned, especially in times of war.

Altogether, there are five age-grades in the Ohafia system. The two most junior grades in this sytem are respectively known as Ùkè and Ùke-jī-ogō. The age-range of the members of the former is 16-25 while that of the latter is 26-35. In both, selection is by age alone. It was from within these two grades that the fighting forces of the community were drawn. Here, a man must prove himself an honourable warrior or forever wallow in the degradation of a coward's life (see 1.2.3 above). In view of the military responsibilities of the members of these two grades, it was customary, in the heroic age, to prepare every age-set adequately before being initiated into the first grade. This preparation began from early childhood, and included harsh, Spartan exercises in warfare culminating in a series of ordeals which formed part of the rituals of initiation.

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31. Elsewhere, in Igbo land, as in the Umeke Agbaja community studied by Miss Green (1947: 25), "the age groups were largely social and convivial in their activities, and concerned with the interests of their own members."

From the Ùke-jī-ogō, various age-sets passed into the third age-grade, Akpan, where they performed police duties. It was from this grade, the age of whose members ranged from 36 - 45, that the hard core of seasoned warriors who served as generals in the wars of the heroic age were drawn. The next age-grade, Umù-Àkà (age-range: 46 - 55), was the only one with a female counterpart known as Ìkpèrìkpè. This was the source of the wise elders who served the community as political leaders, and as judges and public orators. Because of the power and privileges of its members, recruitment into it was only by selection from those members of the Akpan grade whose services to society were considered most meritorious. This selection was also restricted to members of the Oha-Eke village-groups.

Those who were not selected to serve in the Umù-Àkà grade stayed on in the Akpan grade until they attained the age of 55, when, if they survivied, they passed into the most advanced grade, Nde-Ìchìn, now playing the role of senators and advisors to the younger generation.

The most important thing about the age-grade system of social organization, for a heroic society like Ohafia, is that it constituted a means of ensuring that the eye of the society focused on its members to evaluate their progress and achievement, in accordance with the established heroic ethos, at every stage of their lives. In this way, men were made more acutely conscious of the necessity for personal success and of the pains of failure. Thus, as we have already seen, every child was groomed right from the cradle for his future role as warrior and in the course of his advancement in the junior age-grades was expected to join

the rank of noble warriors by performing deeds of valour. Thereafter the way lay open for him to enjoy the respect of his fellow men and to wield power and influence in the upper echelons of the age-grade system. Survivial into the venerable grade of Ìchìǹ was the supreme goal of life, for in this grade, the individual could now be looked upon as a "living ancestor", addressed by the same title, Nnà (Father) or Nne (Mother)[32] which is also applied to the deified ancestors in the spirit world (see 1.4.1 below); here, one could look forward with pleasure and satisfaction to death and to the prospect of reincarnating to continue the life of glorious achievements in the human world.

1.4. CULTURAL TRADITIONS[33]

In the light of the foregoing, it is perhaps not surprising that the principal preoccupation of Ohafia cultural traditions is with the ideal of personal success, a heroic ideal which over the generations has become the basis of a religious and philosophical tradition dominated by the veneration of dead ancestors and brave warriors as a source of inspiration to successive generations (1.4.1). As we shall see presently, the principal channel of tradition for communicating and maintaining the continuity of this heroic ideology is a body of historical traditions dominated by heroic legend and transmitted from generation to generation through a wide range of traditional art forms. Among these

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32. Ordinarily, nnà and nne simply mean 'father' and 'mother' respectively, but applied to venerable old men and women, connotes the idea of 'greatness'. It is in order to convey this difference that the initial letters of these terms are spelt here and elsewhere in the thesis with capital letters.

33. The information contained in this section is based largely on Nsugbe, Nzekwu and Uka (see note 25 above).

traditional art forms are the songs studied in this thesis (1.4.2).

1.4.1 The Heroic Tenets of Ohafia Religious Beliefs and Philosophy

I have already referred to the fact that the respect accorded by the Ohafia people to brave warriors in their lifetime was continued in their death (1.3.3. above). This practice stems from a belief, common to all Igbo peoples, that death is only a stage in an endless cycle of movement from the world of spirits to the human world, and from the human world back again to the world of spirits (see Azuonye, 1977a). Men who attain the venerable rank of Ìchìn in their earthly existence continued to be honoured after death. Such men constitute the highest rank in the hierarchy of spirits of the dead, and are known as aruǹshi (i.e. "ancestral" as opposed to ordinary spirits).

While all spirits influence the living in many different ways, the influence of the ancestral spirits is the most positive, being directed at ensuring that men do not fall short of the high ethical and moral standards, which is the basis of peaceful progress and stability in the society. On those who upset the social order, they inflict severe penalties. Consequently the favour of the ancestors is piously courted by the living through regular sacrifices and a communion involving the pouring of libations, in which the dead are invited to share with the living and guide their ways. This is a general Igbo practice; but in Ohafia, it is given so much prominence that there is now little or no place at all, in the people's religion, for the concept of chi, or the universal power of life, which is the central tenet of the religious beliefs of most other Igbo societies

(see Azuonye, 1977a and 1977b).

The prominence of ancestor-veneration in Ohafia traditions is due to two main factors. First of all, the circumstances of the people's past have given rise to the traditional conception of history as a record of the heroic deeds of the ancestors in their efforts to secure the land now occupied by their descendants against the claims of hostile forces. This traditional philosophy of history will be discussed in some detail in the introductory section of Chapter 4.

If history, as the Ohafia people see it, is a record of the heroic deeds of the ancestors in a past heroic age, it follows that its primary purpose must be to inspire the younger generations to emulate the example of their fathers in dealing with the challenges of their own times. In order to effectively accomplish this objective, Ohafia historical traditions present the career and times of the ancestors in accordance with what has been described as the legend of the heroic age -

> the legend of an age which, in the splendour and scope of its achievements and in the prodigious qualities of the men who took part in them, is thought to eclipse all that come after it (Bowra, 1972: 79)

Among the ritual and artistic means, developed by the people over the generations, for the purpose of communicating and maintaining the continuity of this heroic image, by far the most important and affective, are the war songs dealt with in this thesis.

1.4.2 War Songs and Other Artistic Expressions of the Heroic Tenets of Ohafia Traditions

Apart from the war songs, other important artistic

means of expressing the heroic tenets of Ohafia historical traditions include the group of sacred sculptures, already referred to above (1.3.1), in which the power and divinity of the ancestors are depicted in impressionistic images. Closely related to the sacred ancestral pots (1.3.1), in that they shroud the image of the ancestors with a certain mystique which compels veneration,[34] these sacred sculptures are enshrined in special halls of ancestral images. The most important hall of this kind is the ọmọ-ukwu temple, a large sanctuary located in the Asaga village-group. This has now been declared a national monument by the Federal Antiquities commission in Lagos. According to Onuora Nzekwu,

> the omo-ukwu is a building of great size, with a beautifully constructed roof supported by pillars and beams about twelve inches in diameter (1964: 126).

It is richly decorated with murals depicting scenes of war as well as scenes from everyday life in the heroic age. But the glory of the building is its gallery of ancestors, both male and female. The figures are impressionistic rather than photographic; in them, the greatness of the hero is suggested by the bulk of his image.

The representation of the heroes of the heroic age in carved or stone images enshrined in special temples is not unique to the Ohafia tradition. Ancestor monuments of the same kind have been noted in the study of the heroic

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34. Part of this mystique is the association of the founding fathers with certain mysterious phenomena in the natural environment. In one of the villages of the Amuma village-group, for example, there is a "rock outcrop" which bears the imprints of tiny feet. In Ohafia traditions, these imprints are described as the foot-marks of the ancestors, a powerful race of dwarfs with tails, "who stood upon the rock and dented it with their tread" (Nsugbe: 103).

ages of many other cultures, and everywhere, there seems to be a close functional relationship between them and heroic poetry.[34]

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34. e.g. on the relationship between such monuments and the heroic poetry of the Tamil, Kailasapathy writes as follows: "Besides the songs of the bards which made them immortal among men, the heroes desired to be remembered in more tangible ways too. The setting up of memorial stones or hero-stones was one such mode of recording the glorious deeds of the fallen heroes ... it may be presumed that the cult of the dead and ancestor worship preceded and blended with this practice. Nevertheless, it would seem plausible that the idea of a monument to a dead warrior bears the unmistakable stamp of the Heroic Age: it is in accordance with the assertive individualism of the heroes whose physical prowess became the perfect expression of the ideal of the society (1968: 235). A similar evaluation of the thematic and functional relationship between the Ohafia war songs and the sacred ancestral images described above will be found in a testimony quoted from one of the leading contemporary exponents of Ohafia traditional values, in section 9.2.2. below. This testimony is in consonance with what we shall see to be the over-riding concern of the songs, namely: the affective presentation of the traditional heroic image of the ancestors, of the nobility of their actions, and of the wisdom and valour with which they overcame the formidable challenges of their age.

CHAPTER 2

THE CATEGORY OF NARRATIVE WAR SONGS

2.1. INTRODUCTION

A distinction may be made between three main categories of war songs[1] within the body of heroic poetry[2] which grew out of the historical

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1. This is not an arbitrary distinction. The Ohafia people themselves also make a distinction between three main categories of war songs, but they lack specific terms based on clearly-discernable criteria for these categories. Thus, while the term ìkpèrìkpè-ọgụ (see 2.2 below) is commonly used to refer to the category of battle songs in terms of its vibrant martial rhythm (see note 8), it is also sometimes used to refer collectively to all categories of war songs, as in Whyte, 1963. Even less precise is the term, itū-afà which is employed to distinguish the category of invocative war songs. As we shall see below (note 20), the term merely refers to the mode of the texts and can equally apply to any other genre of oral poetry (praise poems and ritual chants) which consist of names and epithets addressed directly to an object of veneration, be it a human hero or a divine personage. Similarly, the terms ụbùbọ and akūko which are employed to distinguish the category of narrative war songs may apply to other literary genres outside the heroic corpus. However, in using the term akūko, the historical nature of the content of the texts is often specified. Thus we have the following related terms: akūko-nde-ìchìn (stories of the ancestors), akūko-akā (stories of the remote past); and akūko-àlì (stories of the land or the earth). These terms are further discussed, below, in section 4.1. Interestingly, ụbùbọ not only means 'narrative' but also 'conversational prose' or simply 'conversation'. Affiliated references to the performance of the narratives as ikpā-ukà (holding a conversation) suggest that, like the Mandika vis-a-vis their historical narratives (Innes, 1976), the Ohafia regard the art of the narrative war songs as - at least, in part - conversational in nature. This is in consonance with our observations regarding the surface "ordinariness" of the language of the texts, in Chapters 5 and 6.

2. Apart from war songs, there are other genres of Ohafia oral poetry which celebrate the doings of the heroes of the society, and these may also be described as 'heroic poetry'. Hunting songs (abụ-ejì-àchụ-ntā), wrestling songs (iri-ǹgba) and the songs of various age-sets and secret societies are all heroic in this sense. Equally heroic and representing for the womensfolk what the war songs represent for the men is the women's dance-song, ọ̀huwa, which is devoted to the celebration of the 'beauty of womanhood' and the virtues which make women an equal social force with the men in the Ohafia double descent system. All these types of 'heroic poetry' stand in contrast to various types of satiric poetry, notably, the ọ̀gbèrè which Nsugbe (1974: 65) describes as "a song in which an offender of the society is ridiculed. If a thief, he may be called names and described as 'a man who wants to eat but not work'."

social and cultural environment surveyed in the foregoing Chapter. These are as follows:

(a) Battle Songs,

(b) Invocative War Songs, and

(c) Narrative War songs.

The present study is confined to the last of these three categories. There are two main grounds for this selection. First, while all the three categories of war songs are traditionally grouped together as abù-ahā[3] (the verbal and poetic component of the larger, musical complex,

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3. The gloss 'war song' for abù-ahā is employed here and throughout this thesis, more for convenience than as an exact English rendering of the Ohafia term. Actually, abù means 'verbal musical expression' and covers all modes of vocal music (song, chant, recitation and speech). It exists to distinguish the verbal musical component of the three-sided musical complex, iri (note 4 below) in which verbal music, instrumental music and dance are grouped together. But it would be both inconvenient and inelegant to use terms such as "verbal music on the theme of war" each time we wish to refer to the texts. To avoid this, 'song' is used here to cover the same range of verbal musical items as those covered by abù. There is precedence for using the term in this wider sense. In such works as Bowra's Primitive Song (1962) and de Vries' Heroic Legend and Heroic Song (1963), "song" is employed to refer to all manner of oral heroic poetry - lyrical, invocative and narrative as well as the minor, the medium and the monumental in scope. Another justification for the description of the texts as 'songs' will be found in the following definition of the term in The Pengiun Dictionary of Music (PDM): "short vocal composition, accompanied or not. The term has no specific meaning, and tends to be defined in various context by contrast to other forms of music". In the context of the present thesis, the term is used in the same sense as abù (any form of verbal musical expression) by contrast to the non-verbal musical items with which the corpus, abù-ahā, is grouped together as iri-ahā.

iri-ahā[4], which includes a well-known type of dramatic war dance and its powerful instrumental accompaniment), the narratives are the only category evaluated as works of art - the original compositions of trained and talented artists performing in accordance with the conventions of an established bardic tradition (see Chapter 3 below). Secondly, a comparative analysis of the texts reveals that, unlike the battle songs and the invocative war songs (which present themselves as relics of purely functional compositions which probably featured in the battles and rites of the heroic age), the narratives are a highly developed poetic genre which, like the epic, possess a composite narrative structure[5]

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4. The close generic interrelationship between song (note 3 above) instrumental music and dance) in African traditions is well-known. These three items are commonly grouped under the same term. The Ohafia term for this kind of grouping is iri, hence the term iri-ahā. An iri may occur in one of seven forms: as song, dance or music, as a combination of any two or all three items. But whatever may be its form of manifestations, its three constituent elements may be evaluated separately. This is usually done by using preceding nomino-verbal items. Thus 'singing' is denoted as igū iri, 'dancing' as itē iri, and the playing of instrumental music as igū iri. For unknown reasons, only the element of song is distinguished by a specific term, abù. Others are simply referred to as iri or specified as by means of the nomino-verbal items listed above; but be that as it may, the fact that the song element is denoted as abu has given rise to the use of this term as a synonym for iri. It is in this sense that the Ohafia war songs are referred to both as abù-ahā and as iri-ahā. While the latter groups the songs with dance and the former distinguishes them as verbal musical expressions, or poetry.

5. Epic poetry is commonly composite in structure, containing features of almost all major types of literature in the tradition in which occurs. The presence of recitation, speech and song modes in the Sunjata epic and in the historical narratives of the Mandika described by Innes (1975 and 1976) may be a manifestation of this quality. But though this quality is sharedby the present Ohafia songs, it is difficult to describe them as epics, for they lack the "retarding elements" which account for the considerable length and magnitude of the epic (see Chapter 8, section 8.2) and, like the Russian byliny (Chadwick, 1932) appear more like the shorter forms of heroic narrative poetry often regarded as the ancestors of the epic and described in various sources as 'heroic lays' (Vries, 1963 and Ker, 1908), 'heroic ballads' (Blackburn, 1978) and 'oral epic songs' (Wilgus, 1959 and Bødker, 1965).

containing both the features of the two non-narrative war songs and those of other literary genres in the Ohafia tradition, notably those of the fable (ilu)[6] and the art of historical oratory (ikũ-aka).[7]

The main section of the Chapter (section 2.4) will be devoted to delineating aspects of the composite structure of the narratives. This will be preceeded by two sections presenting the battle songs (section 2.2) and the invocative war songs (section 2.3), with emphasis on their dynamic military and ritual roles in the heroic age and on features of theme and mode apparently adopted from then and incorporated into the structure of the narratives.

2.2 BATTLE SONGS

Battle songs are a universal literary phenomenon. They occur in the oral traditions of all formerly warlike societies as reminders of the poetic spirit with which heroic ancestors confronted danger on the battlefield in the pursuit of honour. Described by the Ohafia people as ìkpèrìkpe-ògù (rhythms of battle)[8] and as part of the arsenal of heroic

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6. By contrast to many other Igbo communities, in which the fable is distinguished by a specific term, akuko-ifò, it is referred to, in Ohafia terminology, by the same term, ilu, which is used to distinguish proverbs and related forms of traditional sayings. However, the use of proverbs in speech is specified as itù ilu (itù = to compare, or to make an analogy) while the telling of a fabular narrative is specified as ilũ ilu (the exact meaning of the preceeding verbal element, ilũ is difficult to ascertain).

7. For further comments on ikũ-aka see 3.2.4 below.

8. ìkpèrìkpe is an ideophonic word referring rather vaguely to rhythm of the war drum (ìkòrò).

warfare (ngwa ọgụ)[9], such songs were not only chanted by warriors on their way to battle and on their way home from successful expeditions, they were also chanted in the course of actual combat on the battle-field, to sustain the momentum of the attack and to demoralize the enemy. Thus, in the corpus available to us, a distinction may be made between three main varieties[10], namely:

(a) Preparatory Battle Songs,

(b) Operational Battle Songs, and

(c) Celebrative Battle Songs.

2.2.1. Preparatory Battle Songs

These are the songs with which warriors marched to battle. Characterized by a tone or urgent anticipation, these employ eating images (i.e. images alluding to the sharing of the meat of wild animals quartered in a hunt)[11] to whet the appetite of the participants for the blood of the enemy. Here is a typical example:

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9. The description of battle songs as ngwa-ọgụ (arsenal of warfare) is contained in a testimony recorded by Poet C (Egwu Kaalu of Asaga).

10. This distinction is also made by the Ohafia people themselves. Thus, in conversations with the singers in the field, the following descriptive terms were noted: abụ-eji-èje-ọgụ (songs performed on the way to battle), abụ-eji-alụ-ọgụ (songs performed in the course of battle), and abụ-anà-abụ-mà-alụgbaa-ọgụ (songs performed at the conclusion of battle). The last of these is closely related to the 'songs of joy', abụ-obì-ụtụo with which women welcomed their victorious husbands, some or other relatives from battles. A song of this type, discussed in section 2.2.3 below is widely regarded, in Ohafia traditions, as constituting the originative material of the art of narrative war songs.

11. It is probable that the prevalence of images of this kind which allude to hunting has to do with what we saw in Chapter I (section 1.2.2) to be the close relationship between the role of the hunter of wild animals and that of the head-hunting warrior.

Nwa m̄, Orìejī, àka m̀ èrile anụ mgbēi! [12]

Orieji, my child, I have not yet eaten the meat

of a wild animal!

Àyà, iyà![13]

Yes, O yes!

Nwa m̄, Orìejī, àka m̀ èrile anụ mgbēi!

Orieji, my child, I have not yet eaten the meat

of a wild animal!

Àyà, iyà!

Yes, O yes!

2.2.2 Operational Battle Songs

These are the battle songs chanted by warriors in the course of actual combat. Here again, the tone is urgent and the words full of allusions to hunting. Thus, in the following example, the warriors seek to demoralize the enemy and to sustain their own morale by comparing themselves to a team of elephants crashing through a village:

Ǹzòǫbu, ǹzòǫbu![14]

Trample, trample!

Enyi mbà, enyi!

Elephants of our land, Elephants!

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12. Mgbēi = the meat of wild animals in contradistinction to the meat of domestic animals.

13. Àyà iya! (translated, 'yes, o yes;') is essentially a musical interjection with no fixed lexical status. But it is expressive of the mood of anticipation, and in this context seems to answer to the translation above.

14. This particular example features so commonly, today, in football matches, electioneering compaigns and similar communal confrontations throughout Igbo land. It is thus difficult to ascertain whether or not it is 'indigenous' to Ohafia, as the people claim that it is.

Nzọgbu;

Trample!

Enyi mbà, enyi!

Elephants of our land, Elephants!

2.2.3 Celebrative Battle Songs

These are the songs of celebration sung by victorious warriors, on their way home from successful expeditions. Reference to hunting is also common in these songs. Thus in the following example, the formidable enemy whose chieftain has been slain or taken captive in battle is compared to a leopard trapped in a hunt:

Onyà àmala agū o!

The leopard has been trapped!

Je, anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà![15]

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

Onyà àmala agū o!

The leopard has been trapped!

Je, anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

It is important to point out that not all celebrative battle songs are cast - as in the above example - in generalized images and symbols of valour. Some examples allude to specific historical events and celebrate the exploits of particular heroes identified by name and sometimes by lineage origins. The following, for example, alludes to the legend of Nne Mgbaafo, the Amazonian female warrior who ventures into the territory of the Ibibio enemy in search

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15. For the basis of the translation given here for iyà, see note 13 above.

of a beloved husband lost in battle:

Nwatà nwaàmì àchowa dī ya!

A young woman is out in search of her husband!

Yà, iya![16]

Yes, O yes!

Nwatà nwaàmì àchowa dī ya!

A young woman is out in search of her husband!

Yà, iya!

Yes, O yes!

Mgbaàfò, ò chōwa dī ya!

Mgbaafo, she is out in search of her husband!

Yà, iya!

Yes, O yes!

Nwatà nwaàmì àchowa dī ya!

A young woman is out in search of her husband!

Yà, iya!

Yes, O yes!

It may rightly be supposed that the specific allusions in celebrative battle songs of this kind to the exploits of particular heroes in particular historical situations are indications that they may have been the earliest flickerings of the material out of which the narrative war songs ultimately came to be created. This may well have been the case, but Ohafia traditions attribute the invention not to a returning victorious warrior but to a woman named Nne Ugoenyi (or, in some versions of the myth, Ucha Aruodo)[17]. As the

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16. Ibid

17. This may well be another manifestation of the special devotion to women in Ohafia culture (see 1.3.1 above).

story goes, Nne Ụgoenyi, the mother of four sons, loses her first three in the wars. She then attempts in vain to protect her lastborn, Egbele, from risking his life in battle. But soon, on the advice of his father (who sees nothing but humiliation worse than death for the boy if he shirked his debt to the community), Egbele ventures out to a particularly fierce encounter, far away at Okpatụ on the northern borders of Igboland, near Nsukka. Then the unexpected happens. He not only returns with the head of an enemy slain in single combat but also with a live captive. When Nne Ụgoenyi hears of the victorious return of her son, she bursts into a song of joy. She tells all those who come to rejoice with her that since she has no money to give her gallant son the customary victory feast required of the mothers of brave warriors, she would go and welcome him with a song: "a song of joy from my heart". And such was the beauty and novelty of this lyric that it became a model for future generations, an established form for the celebration of the exploits of particular heroes (see Egbele B1, Text 42*).

Yet by the standards of the narrative war songs, the song of Nne Ugoenyi as remembered by contemporary singers is hardly an improvement on existing celebrative battle songs of the kind quoted above. Often sung as a kind of envoi to the full-length narration of the story of Nne Ugoenyi, in various versions of Egbele (Texts 42-45), it is as prim, awkward and repetitious as any other battle song in the contemporary corpus and uses the same choric refrain:

Egbele nwa mu!

Egbele, my son!

Je anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

I wū Egbele nwa mu!

You are (indeed) Egbele, my son!

Je anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

Yeì, Egbele nwa mu!

Yeì, Egbele, my son!

Je anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

M̀ tipue Egbele nwa mu!

I cry (for joy), Egbele, my son!

Je anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

Ì magī Egbele àluale!

Do you not know Egbele is back!

Je anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

Ì marale Egbele àluale!

And do you not know Egbele is back!

Je anyī jee-e-e, jè, iyà!

Forward, let us go, yes, forward!

2.2.4 The Performance of the Battle Songs

Whatever may be the true nature of the relationship between the battle songs and the more highly developed category of narrative war songs, an examination of their mode of performance in various contexts today, reveals a

high degree of continuity with their original role in the heroic age. Most revealing is the manner in which they are presented in the performance of the Ohafia war dance on various ritual and festive occasions.

The Ohafia war dance is essentially a pageant and dance drama: a pageant in the sense that it constitutes a public exhibition of military weapons and battle trophies; dance-drama in the sense that it constitutes a dramatic re-enactment of typical battle scenes and situations, including the march of warriors to battle, their actual field operations and the victorious return from successful expeditions. Three main stages are easily distinguishable in the dance, each accompanied by an appropriate variety of battle songs which functions as a kind of libretto to the actions re-enacted.

Stage I may be described as an entry procession - a procession through the village high-streets, from the main square of one village or village-group to another. See section 1.3.2 above for a description of the layout of the village setting of this procession. A re-enactment of the march of warriors to battle, this procession is appropriately accompanied by preparatory battle songs, the variety of battle song with which warriors traditionally marched to battle. Singing these songs, the performers brandish their guns and matchets with gestures imitating the caution and fear with which the warriors of old made their often risky journeys through thick rain forests in which potential head-hunters generally lurked.

Stage II of the re-enactment takes place in the arena of a village-square. This arena performance usually consists

of the dramatization of actual battle.[18] This stage of the re-enactment is appropriately accompanied by operational battle songs - the variety of battle songs sung by warriors in actual combat. It generally exhibits superb virtuosity, on the part of the dancers, in registering vivid impressions of an on-going battle, through highly stylized and beautifully choreographed movements; but it is sometimes difficult (especially on festive occasions) to restrain the dancers from indulging in excessive exhibitions of their agility and masculine physique.

The third and final stage of the drama consists in another procession, this time a victory procession, either to the arena of another village-square for another performance or back to the cult-house of the performers. This procession is appropriately accompanied by celebrative battle songs - the songs of victory sung by warriors on their way home from successful operations. The singing of these songs continues until the performers approach another village-square, whereupon they begin another entry procession in preparation for another arena performance.

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18. Some informants interviewed in the field claim to be able to recognize and place in historical context some of the battles re-enacted. But this is doubtful, and as no convincing evidence in support of this claim was offered. It is however worth pointing out that, like their fellow Cross River Igbo, the Ohafia possessed a system of writing, ǹsìbìdì (MacGreggor, 1909, Dayrell, 1910 and 1911) which is also a secret system of signs with cryptographs which may be drummed (Dike and Ekejiuba, 1978: 297) or and even danced (Abalogu, 1978). According to Abalogu, "Even when an Inyankpe mask is going to salute someone and moves majestically in measured steps with a bunch of 'Ojikirisi' leaves in the left hand and a whip in the right and tilts his head forward and raises it in quick succession, he is asking a question (to) which only the initiate who knows Nsìbìrì can reply" (1978: 94). It is uncertain whether the Ohafia war dance is "read" and understood in like manner.

Needless to say, the wheel of this ritual does not always complete a perfect circle in all performances. Numerous lapses and distortions occur on many occasions. But this is to be expected. However, in the hands of skilled and experienced performing troupes, the symmetry of the circle is generally maintained.

The impression may have been created in the foregoing account that battle songs are the only type of Ohafia war songs performed in the formal contexts featuring the drama of the war dance. In fact, there are a number of intervals of varying duration, in the arena performance (Stage II), during which the dancing is suspended and the performers retire to a corner. The stage is then taken by one or more singers who now entertain the audience with the stories of the heroes, interspersing the narratives with chanting of praise invocations and the singing of battle songs.

2.3. INVOCATIVE WAR SONGS

While the battle songs originally featured in the heroic age as part of the actual conduct of heroic warfare, the category of invocative war songs appears to have originally formed part of the religious and magical ceremonies which, according to the literature (see Uka, 1972: 80-81 & Isichei, 1976: 80), were normally held before and after all major wars to prepare warriors spiritually for battle or to purify them after their deeds of bloody slaughter.[19] Distinguished in terms of their mode of delivery as itū-afà (invocation by

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19. Uka (1972: 80-81) writes that, on their return from the battle, "the warriors who had secured heads of victims were made to undergo rigorous purification rites before rejoining their families and moving freely once again in the community".

names or praise-names)[20], these are like the Zulu praise poems described by Lestrade (1937: 295) "a type of composition intermediate between the pure, mainly narrative epic, and the pure, mainly apostrophic ode, being a combination of exclamatory narration and laudatory aspostrophizing". It is however important to remark that these features of the sophisticated praise poem are not found in all sections of the texts available to us. Some passages are more overtly liturgical in character than others, presenting themselves as incantations invoking the aid of the divine ancestors and exorcizing cowardice in the warriors about to set out for war.

2.3.1 Ritualistic Elements in the Invocative War Songs

The following passage from Nde Ikike Ohafia (Text 72*) illustrates the predominance of ritualistic elements in the invocations:

1, He that would shudder before a corpse I say,
let him retreat!

2. He that would shudder before a corpse I say,
let him retreat!

3. Ajadu, son of Uma Ajadu, pray drink wine from
my horn.

4. Mkpawe, son of Imaga Odo, pray drink wine
from my horn.

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20. Itū-afà occurs, (i) in everyday social communication as a form of greeting specially reserved for titled elders in the society, and (ii) in formal ritual and celebrative contexts, in the form of supplicatory invocations addressed to gods, ancestors or other powerful spirits (in religious worship or magical rites). In other contexts, those of pure entertainment or other forms of socialization, it occurs in the form of conventional praise poetry. For a reference to, and gloss of, the first of these manifestations of the mode, see Ojike, 1946: , and Williamson, 1972: . This manifestation is also often found in oratory and other forms of formal speech. In these instances, the speaker salutes his audience by their collective praise-name as a family, lineage, village-group, or community of village-groups.

5. Adukuru Mmanwu, son of Udumoke, wherever you may be, we are at wine!

6. Kamalu, son of Ngwo, man of the lineage of Agalado-Odo-Ukiwe, drink wine from my horn and soothe my voice, for the night that fell on àfò[21] has dawned my ǹkwo!

7. My ancestor, Awa Afaka, he that goes to battle with a farming knife.

8. Man of the lineage of Udegbe-Ezi-Anunu

9. Pray, drink wine from my horn, for the lip dipped in wine is the wine itself.

10. Ogba Ebi, wherever you may be, we are at wine ...

11. My ancestor, Akwu, man of the lineage of Abia Eteete.

12. I beg of you, draw water only and spare the fish in the river...

13. I say, he that would shudder before a corpse, let him retreat!

Throughout the invocation, the two formulaic lines[22] used respectively to urge valour (1, 2 and 13) and to invite the dead ancestors to join the living in the ritual communion of wine (all other lines) are repeated in the form of a leit-motif[23], reinforcing the traditional heroic ideal of manly prowess and suggesting the idea of the continuous flow of what may be described as the 'heroic afflatus' from the valiant acestors to their living descendants.

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21. Àfò and the name immediately following (i.e. ǹkwo), are - in that order - the third and fourth days of the Igbo market week (See Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1, note 29).

22. Formulaic lines are whole poetic lines which recur in the texts and function more or less in the manner of the formulas discussed in Chapter 5. They are further discussed in Chapter 6 (section 6.2).

23. Leit-motif is used here as in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Third Edition, 1964), to refer to "a theme associated throughout (a)work with a particular person, situation, or sentiment".

In general, passages in which ritualistic elements are dominant appear to resemble the primitive type of praise poem described by Cope (1968: 51): they are "simply a collection of praises consisting for the most part of single lines or verses." They are, however, not a haphazard collection of praises. A critical examination of a complete text (e.g. Text 72*) will show that the praises and the names of the heroes to whom they refer are rather like a chain of beads on a string, the string being the common historical experience of the Ohafia people while each bead constitutes a unique story, the legend of a particular hero, presented to us in concise form, by means of apt metaphors, similes or allusions. Even in the short excerpt quoted above, we have a hint of the legends of two heroes, (a) in the epithet, "he that goes to battle with a farming knife" (line 7) and (b) in the epithetic injunction,[24] "draw water only and spare the fish in the river" (line 12). These both invoke the legends of particular heroes and serve to present characteristic pictures of their physical appearance and psychological attributes and to suggest vital associations between them and their lineages, age-sets and other heroes of their age. For a fuller discussion of these features of the traditional epithets in the war songs, see section 5.2 of Chapter 5.

From what we have seen so far about the role of the epithets in the invocations, it can be seen that beneath

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24. Epithetic injunctions are phrases in the imperative mood based on epithets and used in invocations to apostrophize a hero. Pathetic fallacy is involved in their use, for the dead hero is implored to perform an action which everyone knows from history that he has already performed. Epithetic injunctions are not as common as epithets proper and are not further discussed in Chapter 5.

their ritual overtones runs a strong ideological argument, a dynamic view of history which stresses the inimitable valour and nobility of the ancestors who took part in the wars of the heroic age, and which, above all, seeks to re-formulate the inherited traditions about the past in such a way as "to remind people of interrelationships that have come into existence as a consequence of their history" (see Ekejiuba, 1972: 34). On account of this, there is a high preponderance of associative epithets in the chants (see 5.2.3 below).

2.3.2 Narrative Elements in the Invocative War Songs

Turning now to the narrative elements in the invocations, it would be seen that these are primarily occasioned by the need to clarify obscure allusions. For instance, in the following passage, narrative elements become perceptible from the point at which the singer realizes the need to clarify an obscure allusion to the hero, Emenike, as the 'Terror of him that came to drink strong palmwine from the raffia grove' (line 2):

1. Emenike, son of Olugu Ezema,
2. Terror of him that came to drink strong palmwine from the raffia grove:
3. He was a great one of the lineage of Oyom.
4. Father Kamalu Ezema was not a man of trouble:
5. It was his friend that provoked him to make trouble.
6. He was a man of (the matrilineage of) Ibinaji Egbenyi Uka:
7. He was not a man of trouble, his friend led him into it.
8. He was a man of (the patrilineage of) Uduma Oriri:

9. It was they that brought wine into this world.

10. Kamalu Ezema Aliukwu.

11. Man of (the patrilineage of) Uduma Oriri, children of Father Utughu:

12. It was they that brought wine here.

Further on in the same text, the singer's perception of the need to clarify another obscure allusion - in this case the reference to the hero, Father Òmòò, as a "spirit" - gives rise to another attempt to explain the myth behind the epithet. In this case, however, the narrative element is further occasioned by the need to lay stress on the mythological significance of the onomatopoeic name, Omoo, which imitates the mooing cry of the cow[25] (lines 6-7):

1. My ancestor, Òmòò, Spirit!

2. He dragged a cow by the rope all the way from the land of the dead to the light of this world;

3. My ancestor, Òmòò, Spirit:

4. He dragged a cow by the rope all the way from the land of the dead to the light of the world.

5. People asked: "Who brought that cow here?"

6. And they were told: "It is my ancestor, Òmòò".

7. Thereafter, they gave that cow the name, Òmò-Òmòò cow.

8. He (Òmòò) was a man of the lineage of Aka-Àka,

9. Man of the lineage the bride price of whose daughters is paid with cattle.

The elaboration of the legends implied in traditional epithets is often as concise as in the passages quoted above; but in some other passages of the text it gives rise to

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25. The Ohafia, like most other Igbo, refer to the cow as mmòò or ehi-mmòò. The onomatopoeic basis of this is striking similar to that of the English verb used in the text.

what may be described as a concatenation of compact narratives.[26] This quality of the invocations is interesting from the point of view of Ohafia traditions which claim that they, rather than the celebrative war songs (2.2.3 above) are the ancestors of the narratives. These traditions suggest that some kind of natural selection may well have taken place in a creative phase which apparently began with the cessation of warfare in the post-heroic era: in consequence a number of allusions in the invocations chanted in the ritual ceremonies of the heroic age have emerged as independent narrative songs, each with a life of its own. The probability that this kind of creative selection took place appears to be supported by the fact that certain texts in the available corpus of narrative war songs are almost exactly congruent, in theme and structure, with some narrative passages in a number of invocations; for example, Ogbaka Okorie B1 (Text 50*) and the opening section of Ndè Ikike Ohafia B2 (Text 71).

2.4 THE COMPOSITE CHARACTER OF THE NARRATIVE WAR SONGS

One important fact that has been stressed throughout the foregoing is that the narratives are composite structures incorporating diverse traditional elements in the manner of the epic. These traditional elements, as we have noted,

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26. Texts 70–74.

include the modes[27] of battle songs and invocative war songs, on the one hand, and the conventions of the folktale and oratory on the other. The texts thus develop aspects of their themes in four distinct but interrelated groups of passages: the lyrical, the invocative, the narrative and the oratorical. The purpose of this section is to give a full account of each of these groups of passages.

2.4.1 Lyrical Passages

These passages serve to highlight points of intense emotion in the drama of the narratives. In them, the singer assumes the first person point of view, simulating the grief, exultation or excitement of his characters, using three basic forms of lyric in the Igbo tradition.

One kind of lyric is akwa (lament)[28]. Passages in

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27. The term 'mode' is used in Innes (1975 and 1976) to refer to the three "styles of vocalization" - recitation, song and speech - found in the heroic and historical narratives of the Mandika. One gets the feeling of a similar variation in styles of vocalization on listening to the tape-recordings of the present Ohafia texts. But they are two consistent modes here: a reciting mode (Innes's recitation mode) which is the overriding mode of narration and a singing mode (Innes's song mode) which is found in the lyrical passages. But sometimes, in the invocative passages, we hear what appears to be a chanting mode (a mode intermediate between the recitation and the song mode); similarly, in the oratorical passages, we sometimes hear a speaking mode (comparable to Innes's speech mode). But there is no one-to-one correspondence between the modes and the four types of passages found in the texts. Indeed, the lyrical passages are sometimes recited in the same tone of voice as the main narrative passages while occasionally the main narrative passages are sung, spoken or even chanted. It is on account of these complex shifts in modes - a matter of purely musicological interest - that the division into modes is not employed in the discussion of the texts here, as in Innes.

28. Lit., 'weeping', 'a cry' or 'tears'. Cp. Milton's use of 'melodic tear' for 'lament' in Lycidas: "He must not flote upon his watry bear/Unwept, and welter to the parching wind,/Without the meed of som melodious tear" (Lines 12-14).

this form are generally the impassioned utterances of women - especially mothers and wives - whose sons or husbands fail to return from the wars. Thus, in the denouement of 'Amoogu B1', Amoogu's mother is pictured as follows as she bemoans the loss of her son (the hero) in the hands of conspirators:

> My Mother Ori Ukpo burst into a lament:
> Amoogu, Son of Olugu Ikpo!
> Were you slain with a matchet or a gun?
> Be it with a matchet or a gun,
> Come, O come, my son!
> Come back, O my son!
> Whether you were slain with a matchet or a gun!
> Alas, my son, iyeyee!
> Iyee-ee-e je!
> Iyee-ee-e je!
> Amoogu-oo-o, iyee-e ge!
> Come, O come, Amoogu-oo-o, iye!
> Iyee-ee-e je! (AM/B1: 149-160)

A similar kind of lament is sung by Nne Mgbaafo, in Nne Mgbaafo C1 (Text 32*)when she discovers that her husband is probably lost in battle, at Asantuma:

> Alas, where is my husband?
> Most of the warriors have returned!
> Alas, where is my husband?
> They only tell me he is on the way!
> (NM/B1: 20-23)

A more sublime kind of lament is sung by the heroine of Ucha Aruodo B1 (Text46*), after she has suffered humiliation in her futile attack on the nurse-maid who beat up the only child of her old age in her absence:

> Come, O come, my child; come let us go away!
> A person that has no child cannot reap the joys of motherhood,
> O yes, a person that has no child is not a human being!
> Aha, iya-aa, iye-a di!
> Aha, iya-aa, iye-a di!
> (UA/B1: 21-26)

Unlike the laments quoted earlier on, this is the kind of

lament known in some parts of Igbo country as akwa àlìlì (lit. reflective weeping)[29]. It is a genre of lyrical lament, in which the grief of the bereaved, or the wounded at heart, is resolved into a consoling and philosophic statement. In this case, the heroine, Ucha Aruodo, consoles herself over her humiliation and over her sadness that her only child is a mere girl, who cannot even protect herself, by reflecting on the fact that she has at least fulfilled her womanhood by bearing a child.

The second major form of lyric in the texts is abù-obī-ùtuo (song from a joyful heart).[30] Incidentally, there are not any instances of this kind of lyric in the main body of the narratives; thus the general impression we are left with, as we listen to them, is one of unrelieved tension and suspense, until the final moment when the task before the hero is accomplished and he returns in triumph to be greeted with the joyful songs of women.

These songs, which we have already discussed in section 2.2.3 above, are the only form of lyric in the narratives which have choric refrains. As soon as they are intoned by the singer, the audience joins eagerly in the chorus, generally showing genuine feelings of elation at the triumph of the hero over the forces that at first seemed insurmountable. As they sing, one can see from the look of

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29. In parts of Awka division, in the Anambra State.

30. More commonly, in other parts of Igbo country, this genre is known as ùgòlì: "ùgòlì is a kind of song of joy. A man breaks into it when he is happy with himself and the world. It bespeaks of his total sense of well-being" (Echeruo, 1971: 64).

their faces that they are relishing the thrill of participating in the victory song of one of the braves whose achievements are regarded as symbolizing the greatness of their community.

If audience participation in the singing of the choruses in the lyrical celebrations at the end of narrative produces such significant dramatic effects, why then is it that the songs in the main body of the narratives do not have choric refrains? One possible reason for this is the need to avoid creating the impression that the narratives are another form of folktale, for the singing of songs with choric refrains as part of narratives is so much a part of chantefables that it is difficult to tell a story with such songs without creating the impression that they are chantefabular narratives. This is the kind of impression no serious practitioner of the art of the narrative war songs would like to create before an audience that demands from him an authentic and realistic handling of the achievements of the ancestors. Thus, the singers not only tend to avoid songs with choric refrains, they also employ the oratorical conventions discussed below (2.2.4), in order to balance the rhetorical force of historical argument against the lyrical and entertaining qualities of the folktale style.

The third form of lyric in the narratives is mkpokù (lit. cry of desperation).[31] Through this form of lyric, a singer can insinuate himself into the drama of the narratives and in a mood of pathetic fallacy anticipate the redeeming

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31. This is often introduced by means of such narrative formulas as Ya kpokù (he/she cried out in desperation to) in the texts.

role of the hero of his tale by crying desperately to him to come to the aid of other participants. A typical example will be found in Amoogu B1 (Text 35*). Here, the singer's cry on behalf of his characters is occasioned by their repeated failure to accomplish the task of loading guns while sitting naked in a nest of soldier-ants. But as an omniscient narrator, he knows the man that would bring salvation; he therefore proceeds to invoke his aid in an apostrophic outburst which we may describe as lyrical invocation, since, like the invocative war songs, it is composed mainly of epithets addressed directly to the hero.

From what we have seen so far of the role of the lyrical passages in the narratives, it can be said, in conclusion, that they bring into the songs two contrasting lyrical attitudes which are bound up with the everyday psychological realities of the heroic age. As an age of great personal tragedies and triumphs, an age of wars and victories, it was generally speaking an age in which the laments of one family was always counterbalanced by the grief of another. The lyrics in the narratives are not just an echo of these emotional states, they are also, for the most part, a reproduction of the tunes in which they were expressed. As we shall see in Chapter 3 (section 3.2.2) much credit is usually given to singers who succeed in reproducing these familiar tunes in such a way as to involve their audience in the emotions which they serve to recall.

2.4.2 Invocative Passages

The primary function of these passages is to present the heroes of the texts as mythological characters with commanding heroic presence. Composed of names and praises,

they are essentially the same in texture as the invocative war songs. Most frequently, these passages occur at the beginning of the narrative[32], giving rise to what we shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter 7 as the direct-pointing narrative technique, a technique by means of which the hero and the major issues of a song are presented to us without any kind of preparation at the very opening of the narrative (7.3.1). A cumulative form of this kind of presentation occurs, for example, at the beginning of Amoogu B1 (Text 35*).

> Odududu ndufu
> Ikoro, Who if he does not lead the way is full of fear
> Ikoro, Who if he does not lead the way is full of fear
> Ancestral Spirit, Uduma Olugu.
> Ancestral Spirit, Okali, Husband of my Ancestress, Aru.
> Ancestral Spirit, that dwells in the Water down at Nde-Awa-Ezema-Ele Elechi.
> Ancestral Spirit, Umezurike, man of the lineage of Ebiri-Ezi-Akuma.
> Ancestral Spirit, Agwu Obasi, man of the lineage of Ekidi-Nde-Ofoali.
> Ancestral Spirit, my Father, Kamalu Ikpo, man of the lineage of Ugwu-Naka-Igbemini...
> (AM/B1: 1-9)

More frequently, however, the opening invocation is concise and to the point as in the following passage from Inyan Olugu B1 (Text 22*).

> Inyan Olugu was a person of Amaeke Abam and was also of Eyen:
> Killer that gave the honour to her husband, Inyan Olugu
> Great daughter, young woman of Eyen, O Inyan Olugu
> Her husband won no head in battle, and so his age-mates made him pay with his yams for his cowardice.
> (IO/B1: 1-4)

The text from which the above lines have been quoted typifies a class of narratives in which the singer exploits the framing device discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 (section

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32. The overall effect of this is comparable to that of the conventional invocation of the Muse in the European classical epics. But there is no divine machinery in the Ohafia songs. In the egaliterian Igbo and achievement-oriented Igbo culture, each man is the architect of his own fortunes and does not require the aid of any divine machinery.

6.3.1) as the envelope pattern. In such texts, we find the opening invocation or something similar to it is repeated at the close of the narration. Thus at the end of Inyang Olugu B1 (Text 22*)we have the following lines which echo the opening lines quoted above:

> Young woman of Eyen, that was how she won a head
> in battle and gave the glory to her husband
> So then Inyan Olugu gave to her husband the glory
> of battle
> Person of Eyen Ezhiaku, O Inyan Olugu!
> Ancestress Inyan Olugu, Killer that gave the
> glory to her husband.
>
> (IO/B1: 25-28)

To sum up, the chief role of the invocations found at the beginning and at the end of the narratives as well as in their middle, is to establish and to buttress the tone of elevated heroic grandeur which is an essential feature of the 'grand style' of heroic poetry. The serial repetition of epithets with legendary, mythological and other implications (as in Amoogu B1, lines 1-9), serves to create a magnified picture of the personality of the hero. The hero is thus perceived as something larger than life, as a kind of divine presence, at once distant and standing before us. In this regard, it must not be forgotten that the heroes of the songs are the deified ancestors of the Ohafia people, and that one of the functions of the songs is to present them in this way.

2.4.3 The Main Narrative Passages

These passages serve to delineate the main outlines of the story of the texts, using formulas and motifs clearly adopted and adapted from fables (ilu)[33], a traditional narrative genre which presumably existed in the oral tradition long before the emergence of the narrative war songs.

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33. See note 6 above.

Among the commonest kinds of fabular motif[34] found in the texts is a stylized patterning of events which may be summarized as follows: there is a problem of common concern; the community rallies their resources to solve it; after repeated efforts, they fail; but at the nadir of hope, help comes from an unexpected source; the problem is solved, and the community lives happy ever after. This kind of pattern occurs in various forms in most of the texts of the narratives. We find it for instance in the story of Elibe Aja (Text 17*), a tale which presents a surface of historical realism. Here, the problem of common concern is the leopardess which troubles Aro country, seizing men and livestock; the Aro then approach the Ohafia for help; they wander from one Ohafia village to another, but they are proudly rebuffed everywhere they go, but they persevere; at last they come to Asaga, where unexpectedly, the hunter-hero, Elibe Aja offers to help; he goes with them and rids their country of the leopardess; the community celebrates.

The same kind of pattern occurs in various versions of Amoogu (Texts 35-41*). Here, Ohafia warriors are faced with the problem of eliminating the short-armed dwarf of Niike, the prodigious warrior, who is so charged with charms that all who follow him partake of his invincibility; the Ohafia warriors seek help; they are told by an oracle that they must find a man who can sit naked in a nest of soldier-ants and charge twelve guns; after repeated efforts they fail, but they persevere; at the nadir of hope a hitherto unknown warrior accomplishes the task and the warriors march against

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34. For another sense in which the term 'motif' is used here and throughout this thesis, see section 4.1 of Chapter 4 below.

the Niike and rout them. They then triumph.

Occasionally, the folktale elements become overt rather than covert. We find the singers using animal characters rather than human ones. However, many of the stories in which the singer substitutes animals for human characters can be read as parables. Nne Acho Ugo B1 (Text 64) for example, appears to be a parable on the violation of the traditional heroic code of honour (see Chapter 4, section 4.5). In some other texts, however (e.g. Texts 5-10), folktale motifs do not appear to be employed in a parabolic manner. They are rather contained in a group of purely fabular narratives which belong to the order of aetiological animal myths. It would appear that tales of this kind are included in the corpus, on account of their didacticism, and part of the function of the songs is to cater for the moral well-being of the society. This may explain the tendency towards moralizing at the end of almost all the texts. Again, this is very much in the tradition of the folktale. In 'Elibe Aja B1' for example, we are rushed into the following moral, after the hero has been reported killed in an encounter with a bush-hog:

> What a man does very well leads him to his death!
> I know this from Elibe Aja that what a man does
> very well leads him to his death
> (EA B1: 77-78)

In other texts, the narratives end, as in many folk-tales by assigning causes to certain facts of experience. See, for example, Amoogu B1 (Text 35*) and Nne Acho Ugo B1 (Text 64*).

Despite the fact the folktale elements appear to be extensive in the narrations, there is a clear limit to their use. The singers play up to their traditional role as trans-

mitters of history by not indulging in some of the more obviously joking elements of the folktale. In preference to such joking elements, the songs employ the rhetorical flourishes of oratory, using its design in order to reinforce the historical seriousness of their testimony.

2.4.4 Oratorical Passages

Oratory is by far the most important vehicle for historical testimony in Igbo (Achebe, 1964: viii). This is in the absence of any other formal class of prose devoted to this kind of communication. Among its rhetorical devices, the following are the most important: the use of proverbs to state the theme of the discourse; the use of exempla to give universal significance to a particular theme; the application of the exemplum to the particular argument of the speech; finally, the clinching of the argument of the speech by means of a pertinent proverb.[35] Sometimes an oration consists simply of a story told as an exemplum and presented as a self-evident fact of life. The purport of parables of this kind is usually self-evident. But in whatever form an oration is cast, it will normally begin with an invocation addressed to the audience and end in like manner. The invocation which normally consists of the names and patronymic titles of the community to whom the oration is addressed may be repeated at any point in the narration in which the orator wishes to call the attention of his audience. It is mainly by the infusion of devices of this kind that the Ohafia singers make the difference between their narrations and ordinary folktales.

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35. A typical example of an oration modelled on the traditional Igbo form and possessing all these features will be found in Achebe's Arrow of God (1964: 26).

As in prose oratory, the narratives tend to begin and end with invocative salutes addressed to the audience. Thus, in the following example, the singer concludes his narration after discussing the significance of the action presented by addressing an invocation to his audience:

> She is a person of Eyen.
> Daughter of great mother Ima Orie of Ezhiaku.
> It is the matriclan of Eyen that caused a husband to be extolled!
> Did you not know it was Eyen that caused a husband to be extolled...
> (To the audience): Ohafia people, I salute you!
> (Chorus from the audience): Woo! 36
>
> (IO/B1: 33-38)

Similarly, in Amoogu B2 (Text), we have the following:

> That was how it happened.
> (To the audience): I salute you
> Chorus from the audience): Woo!
>
> (AM/B1: 145-146)

As we have noted, an orator may break off in the middle of an argument and call the attention of his audience before he proceeds. The singer of Amoogu C1 (Text 40*) frequently adopts this oratorical convention, since his narrations generally tend to be highly elaborative and long. Thus, in the following passage, the singer breaks off in the middle of a phrase and calls his audience to order before resuming his narration:

> Amoogu set out and arrived,
> Put aside his gun.
> E ! and he put aside his matchet.
> They told him, '(we represent) Ohafia Udumezema'.
> (To the audience): Attention now
> (Audience): Yaa[37]
> Amoogu settled down first and had a meal.
> He searched out his okpom and took it.
> He searched out his gun and carried it.
>
> (AM/C1: 191-199)

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36. This is a conventional way of responding to the salute of an orator or narrator.

37. This is a variant form of the response explained in note 9, above.

Similar salutations are also found at the beginning of stories. For example, 'Amoogu C1' begins with a call for attention:

Choo! oke-okpa Nde-Awa-Ezema Elechi
(AM/C1: 1)

implying, "Attention now! I am going to sing of the great Cockerel of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi".

Turning now to the use of proverbs or parables to introduce the themes of some narratives, as in oratory, we have the following instances from Amoogu B1 (Text 35*) and Ogbaka Okorie B1 (Text 50). In the former, an introductory invocation of about 9 lines is followed by the following in which the theme of the narrative is stated parabolically:

> We have dragged a cow by a rope and tethered it
> at Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi:
> The cow will no longer stray into the farming land...
> Now, who will go and catch the wild cow roaming
> about in the forests?
>
> (AM/B1: 10-15)

We are then told, in the next six lines who this 'wild cow' is:

> Ohafia people, they were set to go to war.
> They were set to go to Niike, they were set to
> go and fight all the way at Niike.
> The Short-armed-one would not allow the defeat
> of Niike,
> The Short-armed-one would not allow the defeat
> of Niike:
> The short-armed-one that would allow the defeat
> of Niike,
> His proper name is Niiko.
>
> (AM/B1: 16-21)

The wild cow then is the Short-armed-one, Niiko, whom Ohafia warriors cannot assail.

In Ogbaka Okorie (Text 50), we have the story of the vengeance of Ohafia as a united, indivisible whole, against a village-group, whose jealous musicians shatter the knees of one of the greatest dancers of the Ekpe dance that ever

lived in Ohafia. The unity and single-mindedness displayed by the Ohafia in this war of revenge is foreshadowed at the beginning of the text by means of a proverb:

> Expert dancer of the Ekpe dance, son of my ancestress, Orieji.
> It was his famous saying that "Where two things stand side by side the one that stands alone forms an indivisible whole".

In the story that follows the truth of this statement is acted out before our eyes.

At this stage, we may refer briefly to what we have hinted above to be the parabolic design of 'Nne Acho Ugo', the story of five birds who shirk their duty of giving their mother a decent burial. This is a typical instance of the oratorical manner of presenting an argument in the form of a parable (see 4.5 below).

In other oratorical passages, the singers address their audiences directly, in fulfilment of what they see as part of their responsibility to the society: unveiling the secrets of their past and those of their enemies, explaining the sources and foundations of important social institutions, customs and beliefs; emphasizing the value of certain moral standpoints and the inadequacies of others; finally, and in a general way, fulfilling the role of exponents of the common tradition which binds man and man, man and his ancestors, and man with his ancestors to the earth.

It is natural to expect that in their role as revealers of secrets the singers should concentrate not in betraying the secret strengths of their own community but in revealing the humiliating secrets of enemy and rival groups. In Elibe Aja (Texts 17* and 19) we have two instances of such revelations. In one instance, it is revealed, with undertones

of sarcasm, that the leopard-skin symbol of the Kings of Aro is in fact the skin of the leopardess, which the Ohafia hero and saviour of the Aro slew:

> It is with the skin of that leopard, which Elibe Aja slew, that they deck their royal throne till today;
> It is with it they deck their royal throne till today!
> They, Aro-Oke - Igbo, the-unsifting-box-that-swallows-everything-indiscriminately.

Another passage of revelation also occurs in Elibe Aja, this time in version B3 (Text 19). Here, the singer speaks of how he once confounded the King of the Aro (Kamalu Oji) by revealing the secret strength of the Aro oracle in a song:

> I told this to Kamalu Oji,
> And he pleaded with me never more to reveal his secrets -
> That was at Aro -
> That I had revealed the secret of their great oracle.

The above passages are also significant for their mythological undertones; but myth, as social charter, is the concern of other passages of explanation which lay stress on the origins and significance of certain customs, beliefs and social structure (see Chapter 4, section 4.4).

In other homiletic passages, the singers make comments based on the stories just completed. Sometimes, as in the case of Elibe Aja B1 (above), the moral statement does not seem to follow logically from the events related but the singer always seems unable to avoid the temptation to draw some morals, for he sees it as part of his duty to his society to do so.

2.4.5 The Performance of the Narratives

Apart from the invocative and lyrical passages which

form part of the composite structure of the narratives, invocations and songs (not necessarily in the form of the invocative war songs and the battle songs) feature prominently in most performances, both as a means of creating variety and especially for various thematic and atmospheric effects.

Most singers begin and conclude their performances with the invocations, using these as a means of paying homage to their hosts and audiences, of saluting the members of their orchestras, and of introducing themselves, in each case tracing genealogies and offering flattering praises. The act of narration then begins. Reciting in a high pitch of voice and in a fast tempo, they move from one compact narrative to another, stopping from time to time to chant more praises and to sing battle songs. One effect of these interludes is to re-echo the atmosphere of the age in which the narratives are set. But some invocations and battle songs, as we have already noted above, are so closely related in theme to some of the narratives that we often perceive them as preludes or envois to the texts which come before or after them.

The whole performance then has a clearly discernable structure, a structure similar to that of the narratives themselves, with moments of straightforward story-telling interspersed by moments of singing and invocation as well as of homiletic talk.

Equally important in the performance of the narratives, as a means of creating variety and the proper atmosphere for the celebration of heroes, are two kinds of accompaniment at the background of the words of the singer. There is first the instrumental musical accompaniment which is understandably a sine qua non of all performances, given the generic relation-

ship that subsists between the texts and music[38]. The second kind of accompaniment is less common and consists in the words of a co-vocalist, known as the chorus-man (onye-nkwechi), who sits beside the lead-singer repeating a whole series of words and phrases which though beautiful and witty in themselves are in no clearly-discernable way related to the meaning of the narratives themselves.

To begin with the musical accompaniment, this generally consists of three basic types of instruments; ọpù (horn), nkwagha (wooden clappers) and nkwà (drum). In informal performances, one of each of these instruments would normally suffice to produce adequate accompaniment to the narratives, but in the more formal performances, the orchestra becomes more elaborate, and two or more of each instrument may be used.

The combined effect of these instruments is a truly dynamic and heart-stirring martial music with the power to rouse everyone exposed to it to physical expressions of his sense of well-being and masculinity. This is not confined to audiences in Ohafia itself; even outsiders to the community respond in much the same way. But these technical details are a matter for musicologists and choreographers. What concerns us here is the relationship between the music and the words of the singers.

A pointer to the important place occupied by the musical accompaniment is the fact that few singers would agree to sing without any form of musical accompaniment. When asked why it is so important to have an accompaniment, one singer

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38. See note 4 above.

(Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon) replied simply that "it helps"; but he fell short of specifying the exact nature of the help derived. However, on further inquiry among other singers and various musicians, the following facts were revealed. The wooden clappers are percussive instruments which, with the drum, serve to regulate the time and the rhythm of the songs. In addition to this, the drum (which is usually a species of talking-drum) serves to beat out praises of its own in cadences which imitate the tone-patterns of the verbal praises. The same effects are created even with greater clarity by the horn (again, a species of talking-horn). In fact, even the uninitiated who understands the Ohafia dialect can easily discern the tone-patterns and make out the words or phrases which they signify.

The repetition of praises through the media of the drum and the horn is not merely decorative; they are in fact regarded as a means of cueing the singer whenever he falls into error. For instance, when a singer uses a praise-name that does not apply in a particular context to any hero, the drummer, or the hornman, or both - if they are as attentive as they should be - would normally intone the correct praise enabling the singer to amend his lines. In a similar way, the hornman and the drummer can also remind the singer of stories he may have forgotten to render or for which there is popular demand.

But these complex and technical details notwithstanding, the overall effect of the musical accompaniment is to heighten the emotional impact of the whole performance on the audience, providing the atmosphere of gaiety and formality proper to the celebration of heroes.

When we turn to the choric accompaniment in the performances of the singers who make use of the services of the chorus-man, we find ourselves somewhat at a loss to fully understand its exact function. In fact, no clear explanation has been offered by either the singers or their audiences, and any suggestion that the chorus-man's words may be distracting - as indeed they would sound to the outsider to the Ohafia society - is firmly denied. It may well be that the Ohafia audiences have developed, through some kind of cultural conditioning, an inner ear which enables them to hear and enjoy the undercurrents of the words of the chorus-man and at the same time hear and enjoy the main currents of the lead-singer's tales. On the other hand, it may be that people are not really interested in the words at all but in the polyphonic melody produced by the combination of the singing of the chorus-man and that of the lead-singer. But, in the final analysis, there is one aspect of the chorus-man's performance which even the bemused outsider can enjoy, if he has an ear for the Ohafia dialect. This is when there is a major pause in the sequence of story-telling and the voice of the chorus-man surfaces, with its wit and humour, to be enjoyed by itself as an item in a programme of mixed entertainment.

CHAPTER 3

THE SINGERS AND THEIR ART

3.1. INTRODUCTION

Any outsider who comes into close contact with the Ohafia war songs in the contexts described in the last Chapter will be struck by the closeness of the rapproachment that exists between the singers and their audiences. In the course of the field investigations on which the present study is based, it was discovered that the singers are generally eager to discuss their compositions and performances, both in relation to the tastes of their audiences and in relation to their own artistic backgrounds and training. In a similar vein, almost every member of the community encountered proved eager to talk about the singers and their songs: to evaluate the competence and performance of individual singers and to talk generally about the dynamic social functions of the songs and about the pleasures derived from listening to them. These evaluations were not just offered with the benefit of hind-sight, in formal interviews; more importantly, they were offered spontaneously, both vocally and by gesture, in the course of the performances which I witnessed.

The criteria on which these evaluations are based will be discussed more fully in Chapter 9. What concerns us at this stage is what they tell us about the status and role of the singers in the Ohafia society, the sources of their art, the criteria for the selection of would-be singers, the course of their apprenticeship and the nature of their training, and finally, the general character of the bardic tradition in which they would normally operate after their training, including patterns of contacts with, and influences

from, other singers living and dead.[1] At every stage of this discussion, reference will be made to the views of Ohafia's local connoisseurs as well as those of the singers themselves and full account will be taken of the lives, careers and personal tastes and attitudes of various singers.

3.2. THE STATUS AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SINGERS

Unlike their counterparts in some other parts of West Africa, (e.g. the griots of Sene-Gambia)[2] the singers of the Ohafia war songs are non-professional amateurs;[3] they are, however, highly-skilled and committed artists, proud of their endowments and respected by their kinsmen and other members of their community on account of their wide historical know-

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1. The theoretical framework for this discussion is Escarpit's seminal work, The Sociology of Literature (1958), especially the chapters dealing with literary production - with the nature of communities of literary artists, the geographical, historical and socio-cultural factors affecting their emergence, development and continuity, and the reflection of these factors on their works.

2. For a discussion of the status and role of the griots of Sene-Gambia, see Innes, 1975: 1-4 and 1976: 4-9.

3. The non-professional status of the Ohafia singer may be seen against the following background provided by Miss Green: "The nature of the Igbo social organization may not be irrelevant to the fact that their literature seems to tend to the episodic rather than to the long chronicle, to lyric rather than to epic poetry, and to the impromptu as well as the traditional. The fact, moreover, that singing, versifying, story-telling, is far more the affair of the man in the street than of professionals may be partly due to the absence of a king's court of a wealthy aristocracy to encourage the growth of a differentiated class of this kind. There are a few professionals, as we shall see in the case of the woman chanter and the man horn player who together perform what is known as eta aveve (‾- ‾_-), but they are comparatively rare. There are, however - amateurs who are recognized as cultured from a literary point of view, who have been brought up in "good" families and can use proverbs and sayings in a way impossible to those less well educated" (1948: 839).

ledge and possession of the art whereby this valuable knowledge is transmuted into a dynamic social force affecting the choices and behaviour of the society at large as well as those of its individual members. To see something of the basis of this high-esteem in which the singers are held, it may be useful to examine a number of generic praise-names by which every successful singer is normally greeted wherever he may be performing.[4] An analysis of these praises reveals facets of the singer's social responsibilities[5] which may be discussed under four headings: (a) the singer as a vocalist, (b) the singer as a lyricist, (c) the singer as an orator-historian, and (d) the singer as a praise-chanter.

3.2.1. The Singer as a Vocalist

The first set of praises refer to the singer in pure musical terms as a vocalist. He is not just a song man (onye abù), he is also olu ogèlè (Gong-like voice), olu nkwà (musical voice), or òkoòko turu nkwà yiri olu (parrot that built a musical instrument and wears it in his throat).[6]

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4. In addition to these generic praise-names, which can apply to any singer, there is a whole range of other specific praise-names which refer to the backgrounds and art of individual singers. These are discussed in section 3.4. below.

5. These responsibilities are, of course, tied up with aspects of the composite structure of their compositions discussed in the last Chapter (2.4.).

6. The parrot features so frequently in local evaluations of the art of the singer that its name Okooko may be regarded as one of the terms for 'bard' in the Ohafia dialect. The association of the parrot with the singer's art is not based on any special myth other than that referred to in section 3.2.3 below which attributes prophetic powers to it. The truth of the matter is that, although the parrot ordinarily screeches in a rather unpleasant manner, especially when it is in the wild - it does possess a beautiful and sonorous whistle. This, combined with its ability to imitate human language and especially to whistle popular songs and tunes accounts for its popularity as a domestic pet and as a symbol of the mimetic powers, art of memory and sweet voice expected of good singers.

Where he is good, people will describe his voice - in ideophonic terms - as ringing sonorously, or gam gam like a bell (see 9.3.4.).

The musicality of the singer's voice is generally appreciated for its own sake: "it is a source of pleasure" (o dì ùtuo)[7], many local connoisseurs say; but more than that, it is the means whereby the singer reaches the hearts of his hearers, putting them in the proper state of mind in which they can best react with passion to the message of the songs. It is in this sense that Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon (K1) asserts, in the following boast, that the sweetness of his voice is the highest attribute of his own performances:

> My voice is sweet (dì ùtuo). But on top of that, I tell them things which gladden their hearts. That is what sustains me in my songs. There are some people who insist on singing when they do not have a sweet voice. No one likes (i.e. even listens to) what such people sing. As for me, my voice is sweet, and I sing those things which, when people hear them, their hearts swell with joy, and they say, "These are things that actually happened." But it is the sweetness of the voice that they like above everything else.[8]

3.2.2. The Singer as a Lyricist

The singer is not only admired for the sweetness of his voice, he is also admired for his lyrical powers: the ability to move men to laughter and to tears through the affective reproduction of the emotional states associated with the three types of lyrical passages discussed in the

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7. Lit. "It is sweet" or "It is interesting".

8. This and other testimonies quoted here and in Chapter 9 were recorded in the field between March 1976 and June 1977.

last Chapter (section 2.4.) above.

Speaking of the effects of the lyrical laments in the narratives, Ogba Kaalu of Abia (OK) tells us that "where these laments are intoned in the proper manner, they have the power to move you to tears". He claims the ability to do this in his songs and suggests that the impact on the audience is generally cathartic, in the Aristotelian sense of the word, i.e. "arousing pity and fear in such a way as to accomplish a purgation of such feeling" (see EPP). But there are also other more joyful passages which do the opposite: arousing feelings of joy and a felicitous identification with the power and nobility of heroic forbears. As Ogba Kaalu explains:

> Whenever this particular genre of iri is performed, our hearts brim with joy: because it is the umbilical cord with which we were born. Whenever we hear its rhythm, our hearts swell with joy: we think of the day of our birth and cherish the day of our death; we think of the day we shall raise our heads in pride and rejoice in anticipation of the day we shall grow rich... So then, we are most happy to see it performed every time.

Elsewhere, we are told:

> It is the thing that made us a powerful nation. It is in our blood. It does not matter whether your two hands and legs are paralysed, nor does it matter if you are crippled and sitting impotent on the ground, but the moment you hear its rhythm, it will surely revive your spirit. The point is that it is bound up with everything we seek, everything we desire in this

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9. These passages are lyrical in one important sense of the term lyric as glossed in Cassell's Encyclopoedia of Literature (London, 1953): Lyric is, inter alia, a poem or a portion of a poem containing "expressions of situations or emotions common in human experience. The personality of the author is present only to the degree which will ensure conviction that the emotion was truly experienced (which is a question of art, and not of 'sincerity' in its most obvious sense" (pp 354-355). This is an extrapolation from the second of the two basic definitions of lyric given in the Encyclopoedia: "(i) a short poem intended for singing usually to the accompaniment of a lyre or other instruments; (ii) a short poem expressing personal feeling" (pp 354).

world. It is an answer to all our needs.

On account of these effects, the Ohafia singer is often eulogized by his audiences as ọ̀kpate ndi ìkọ̀m (He that arouses the spirit of youths). He "awakens your spirit", says one informant, and his songs "inspire" in the young "that old bravery", the bravery of "their ancient fathers" (Ukiwe Maduekwe of Asaga).

3.2.3. The Singer as an Orator-Historian

Another aspect of the multiple social responsibilities of the Ohafia singer stressed in the generic praise-names and in the testimonies of local connoisseurs is his role as orator-historian, onye-ọ̀ku-aka (lit. He that evokes the past). His primary equipment for this role is his powerful memory aided by his oratorical skill. In this respect, the praise, ọ̀kọ̀ọ̀kọ ǹkàm ǹkà is most telling. It means "parrot, the talkative artist".[10] The parrot is not only noted for his powers of mimicry but also for his high powers of memory and alleged powers of prophecy. It is with the former that the Ohafia singer is particularly associated. Thus, Ogba Kaalu boasts of "a tape-recording mechanism" in his head and one of Echeme Ogwo's drummers tells us that his bard has "a magnet in his brain": "Nothing you tell him ever escapes him; and he will never forget it."

The singer's excellent memory is combined with his oratorical skill, the latter being the principal vehicle for his historical testimony. But through his power of oratory (his "talkativeness", as referred to above), he would normally include general commentary on culture and society, as

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10. The word, ǹkà means "art", while the preceding item, ǹkàm means "talking and talking".

part of his testimony. In this way he functions in the society, not only as a singer of historical tales but also as a moralist, teacher and custodian of cultural values.

3.2.4. The Singer as a Praise-Chanter

Closely-related to his role as an orator-historian, the singer also functions as a praise-chanter. He brings pleasure to people by telling them about their ancestors and the kind of men they were:

> He will put you into deep thought about what your great great grandfather was, about your own father's mother, about the life of your own mother[11] he will go on and on talking, talking until he wakes you yourself from sleep. Perhaps he will tell you what your father was in such a way that, while he is talking, you will forget yourself and give him whatever you have in your hand. If you have a goat in hand, anything you have in hand, you will give it to him.

But the singer is not only concerned with the genealogies of individuals. He is also concerned with those of lineages and groups. Thus KI offers the following boast:

> I can tell you all about your father, his mode of life and the manner of his death; and if you go and ask your kinsmen, they will surely tell you that it is the truth - that your father actually led that kind of life. I can tell you all about your own ancestry, right from the very God that created you, down to the present time; and I can tell you all about the mode of life your kinsmen lead today...
>
> Take Ohafia as a whole. I can tell you all about our origins - about the place from which we migrated to this place...
>
> This compound of ours, I can tell you all about its founding father. About other people's compounds, I can tell you all about their founding fathers. When I go to Amaekpu, I tell them all about their founding fathers...

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11. Notice the preference here of maternal ancestors. This is in consonance with our observations in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.1.) on the strong matrilineal tendencies of the Ohafia's double-descent system.

> As you will know, Amaekpu is not my native village. But I know everything that prevails there. Ebem, I know everything that prevails in that village. Asaga, I know everything about their founding father, and I know everything that prevails there, everything conceivable that prevails there. This is what we call ikū-aka - knowledge of the ancestors: knowledge of the founding father of Asaga, knowledge of the founding father of Akaanu, knowledge of the founding father of Uduma.[12]

Another common term for ikū-aka is ikpō-afà (i.e. calling names). This calling of names is not done haphazardly; it is rather an art which demands of the singer to appeal to all sections of his audiences by ensuring that he refers to the ancestry and importance of all major lineages in as fair a manner as possible. This is known as nkpozù (complete, or balanced, invocation). As explained by KI, the singer's genealogies must include every major lineage in Ohafia as a gesture of compliment; nothing must be left to obscurity:

> When I come to the invocative parts of my songs, I call them one by one - this one used to live in the village of Amaekpu; this was what he did. He was the most powerful person at Amaekpu; so Ohafia selected him as one of their brave ones. I will then praise a person of Amangwu: this was the brave one of Amangwu. He was the most powerful person in Amangwu; so Ohafia selected him as one of their brave ones. Then I will praise Akaanu: this was the brave one of Akaanu. He was the most powerful. So, Ohafia selected him as one of their brave ones. Then, I will praise Asaga: this one was their brave one. He was the greatest ... then, I will praise Okon. This one was the brave one of Okon. He was the most powerful in Okon. So Ohafia selected him as one of their brave ones - the people that fight for them.

In his testimony, the Chief of Asaga, also pays a great deal of attention to the phenomena of balanced catalogue of heroes,

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12. This is essentially a stylized form of boasting shared in common by all the singers. But KI goes on to justify his boast in his compositions, especially in his version of Amoogu (Texts 35-41*).

delineating its characteristic features and effects, in an attempt to specify qualities which he considers as authentic in the narratives.

> When people begin to sing in praise of the founder, they talk of this and that and then after that, they begin to talk of those who came after him right up to the present... even the last ruling paramount chief is mentioned...
>
> Most singers concentrate on the village first; and then the singer can begin to say: it is in this place - about that very time - such and such a thing happened. In this village, about that very time, such and such a thing happened. They go on mentioning...
>
> ... you see them mentioning certain heroes of the past and what they did... they will mention all the heroes whoever did anything for the nation. You see them recounting various deeds of our ancestors - how they moved from place to place until they founded here (spoken in English)

3.3. SELECTION, APPRENTICESHIP AND TRAINING OF THE SINGER

Needless to say, the effective fulfilment of the wide-ranging social responsibilities outlined above depends to a large extent on the singer possessing the necessary skills and discipline. Are these skills inborn or acquired? If inborn, what does tradition say about the nature of its heritability. If otherwise, what are the processes through which the would-be singer acquires them? Is there a well-defined system of selection, a fixed or regular course of apprenticeship, a formal procedure of training? If not, in what other manner does the singer acquire his skills?

3.3.1. Emphasis on Apprenticeship and Training

We may begin by stating that there is general agreement among the Ohafia people that the art of singing does not spring from any form of mystic inspiration. All agree that it is fashioned by training and practice; it rarely comes

through any other way. It is however admitted that some people are naturally of an artistic bent and that others have the advantage of being born in families with long traditions of singing, but even these must submit themselves to rigorous training under a master-singer who they will, in later life, often acknowledge as their "fathers-in-song".[13] Without such a careful grooming, it is believed by local connoisseurs that no intending singer will ever be able to sing what the generality of Ohafia people will accept as authentic. The position is succintly put as follows by Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon:

> If you are a singer and people recognize the fact that your voice is sweet but know that you have not been trained by a person well-versed in the art of historical remembrance (ikū-aka), that is, a person who says what Ohafia people as a whole accept; if you simply lock yourself in your house singing to please yourself, or even if you go out and sing with others, you will never be credited as singing with the voice of an experienced singer: you will never be able to sing what Ohafia people as a whole will accept. The point is this: if you are a singer, if your voice is sweet, Ohafia people will tell you, "Go and meet Kaalu Igirigiri. He will teach you songs. Your voice is sweet". When you come to me, I will tell you all those stories the old masters told me. If you sing these stories as told, Ohafia people as a whole will accept: women will accept, men will accept, everyone... but if you stay in your house singing to please yourself, without any course of training under a master-singer, your songs

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13. The term "father-in-song" is a convenient rather than an exact rendering of the Igbo term, onye-mū-m-n'abù (lit, the person that gave birth to me in song). The term is comparable to the modern Igbo term for Christian god-father, i.e. onye-mū-m-na-mmiri-Chukwu (lit. the person that gave birth to me in baptism). It is commonly used by singers when referring to their masters. A comparable term, 'poetic son', exists in English literary criticism. However, no exact Igbo equivalent to 'poetic son' has been recorded as yet in Ohafia, but the analagous term, 'son-in-song', is used elsewhere in this study to refer various singers in relation to their masters.

can never be sweet; you will never be able to sing it properly.

3.3.2. Selection of the Would-be Singer

If training is so essential to the art of the Ohafia singer, what are the procedures for the selection of would-be singers for training? "Selection", in this context is perhaps the wrong word, for there is no evidence of any kind of formal selection in the tradition. Unlike what obtains in some other African societies,[15] the role of the singer is not confined to any one social class, caste, family or lineage; rather, it is open to all and sundry. Thus, in practice, most people elect to sing of their own accord. They become interested in the works of particular master-singers and ultimately attach themselves to such singers, accompanying them to wherever they go and learning by induction the manner in which the songs are performed. This, according to members of Echeme Ogwo's singing group, was how their leader joined the rank of singers.

There are a few other singers, who, in an attempt to enhance their hold over their audiences, claim supernatural inspirations, through dreams.[16] They imply by this that their compositions are more authoritative than those of their rivals,

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14. KI is here referring not only to the repertoires of traditional stories learnt by the apprentice from his master but also to the formulaic devices (discussed in Chapter 5) by means of which singers traditionally create their themes (Chapter 6).

15. e.g. Sene-Gambia, where the role of the griot is confined to a particular caste (see Innes, op.cit., note 8, above).

16. I did not encounter any such singer myself in the course of my field work, but Mr. Kalu Uka of the Department of English, University of Nigeria, tells me that there are such singers in his hometown, Akaanu Ohafia.

since they have been called into their role by divine beings, or the ancestors. Claims of divine inspiration are common in the practice of poetry all over the world, and it might reasonably be supposed that, in addition to the boost such claims give to the poet's acceptability to his audiences, they are also an expression of his recognition of the flow of the "divine afflatus" within him.[17]

A more common and practical way in which singers are 'selected' in the Ohafia tradition is by the discovery of talent and potentiality in a young man, especially a man with a beautiful voice. When such a person is discovered, he would normally be encouraged by his relatives and friends to go and attach himself to a master-singer. According to Kaalu Igirigiri:

> If you are a singer and it is recognized that your voice is sweet, Ohafia people will tell you: Go and meet Kaalu Igirigiri. He will teach you how to sing. Your voice is sweet.

Sometimes a master-singer discovers such a talent himself, from among his drummers or others in his orchestra. Alternatively, he may notice an enthusiast among his regular audiences, and after a period of trial may decide to bring him up as a likely successor to himself. The singer, Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon, claims to have been 'selected' in this manner.

Apart from the foregoing cases of self-election, divine inspiration, discovery and actual selection by master-

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17. 'Divine afflatus' is a term attributed to Cicero (De Oratore 2.46). According to Cicero, "no man can be a poet who is not on fire with passion and without a certain touch (afflatus) of frenzy". In De Natura Deorum 2.66: "No one... was ever great without a certain divine afflatus" (EPP).

singers, most other singers are men who find themselves in the role of bard, because they belong to certain families among whose members the art has been handed down for several generations. In such families, the art is regarded as a valuable inheritance to be jealously guarded, like the art of medicine and surgery. Of the six singers discussed in this study, Ogba Kaalu is the only one who claims to have inherited his art in this way:

> My own father sang these war songs beautifully. Kaalu, my father, he sang it beautifully. My own father, Kaalu, sang it beautifully. It is something that runs in our line. My eldest brother, Arunsi Onu, he used to bear the greatest trophy-basket (used in the war dance)[18] - he used to bear it for all the villages: for the whole of Ohafia, he used to bear it. He bore it till he died and it passed to Okezie Abia. But after him, I don't think that anyone else has performed as well as he did.

3.3.3. Apprenticeship and Training of the Singer

There is no fixed period of apprenticeship in the Ohafia bardic tradition; nor is the training of the singer institutionalised as would seem to be the case with the training of griots of Sene-Gambia.[19] Each apprentice-singer determines for himself who to apprentice himself to (if he

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18. The trophy-basket (àgbàdaàgbà) is a long basket decorated with pieces of multi-coloured cloth and yellow palm-leaves (òmu) and used to display skulls won in battle (or, in recent times, fake skulls representing real skulls won in battle). The lead-dancer bears this basket on his head during performances of the war dance.
It is believed that potent charms are employed to ensure that the basket does not fall from the bearer's head, no matter how rapidly he moves forward and backwards or sways sideways or even tumbles. But it seems more likely that the trophy is kept in position more by acrobatic skill than with the aid of charms.

19. See Innes, op.cit., note 8, above.

is not selected by a master-singer). He does not have to go and live with his master. Rather he carries on his normal occupation (usually farming or trading) and only consults the master as often as he likes or whenever he can find time to do so. He also decides for himself what to take or leave from his master's admonitions, and when to set himself up as a full-fledged singer.

The whole process then is highly individualistic and inductive, somewhat like the apprenticeship and training of performers of the Xhosa Ntsomi described by Scheub (1975: Chapter II). Be that as it may, there are two patterns of apprentice-master relationship which seem to have established themselves firmly in the Ohafia tradition.

In the first case, a singer begins his career as a member of a master-singer's orchestra. From long association with the master he gradually acquires the art, ending up as his master's successor. During the master's lifetime, he would normally stand in for him in his absence, taking over completely when the master dies. Alternatively, he may break away from the group, once his voice is 'strong' enough,[20] to start his own performance group.

The second pattern of apprentice-master relationship involves apprentices operating outside particular orchestral groups. These begin by undertaking research into local historical traditions, consulting the oldest men in various parts of Ohafia and learning from them the myths, legends and genealogies of major families, lineages and village-groups. After this painstaking research into local historical

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20. The phrase on which this translation is based is 'mgbè olu yā sìrì ike'. It is a way of saying: 'when he has gained confidence as a singer', or 'when he can sing with confidence'.

traditions, the cost of which is borne entirely by the apprentices, they then attach themselves to a master-singer. It is at this stage that the apprentices begin to build up the formulas with which they would later create their narratives; they also learn from their master the proper manner in which the formulas are organized for the creation of themes, and themes for the creation of episodes and whole narratives; finally, their master grooms them to acquire what local connoisseurs in Ohafia describe as "the proper vocal style for the singing of war songs" (see Section 9.4.4. of Chapter 9). Everything else is acquired by the singer in the course of his later career and contacts with other singers.

3.4. THE PRACTICE OF THE SINGERS

Not being professionals, the Ohafia singers generally combine their peasant occupations (farming, subsistence trading, craftwork, smithing and medical practice) with their bardic career. Thus, they only sing in their spare time, as amateurs, but they usually do so with a degree of commitment and business-like organization which can be paralleled to what obtains among professional bards.

3.4.1. Commitment and Rivalry

That the Ohafia singers are first and foremost committed artists, conscious of their responsibilities to their society, is well attested to by the passion which they bring into their testimonies on the nature and purpose of their practice (see Chapter 9). But, unfortunately, this commitment is generally alloyed with virulent rivalry. Some dead singers, such as Okonkwo Oke (d. 1966), are widely

believed to have died in mysterious circumstances; and poisoning or witching has been adduced among the causes of such deaths. But true or not, the very currency of such tales - especially when they emanate from practising singers - seems to indicate how far animosities born of jealousy, or the fear of being superceded by more accomplished rivals, can go.

The intense rivalry among singers is often expressed in the form of the stylized ritual boasts referred to in section 3.3.3. above (see note 12), but few singers have shown any determination to avoid abusive language in their estimation of their rivals, and even today performances are sometimes marred by the intrusive noises and distractive side-comments made by trouble-makers deliberately planted in the audience by rival singers.

3.4.2. The Organization and Rating of the Singers

The activity of trouble-makers in performances given by rivals is only one side of the business-like organization of the singers. On the more positive side, there is a network of links between singers and musicians in villages other than their own. These links enable singers to respond to invitations in any village without loss of time and without the extra cost of transporting musicians from his own village.

The singer's contactmen in various village-groups also act as his public relations managers, using every opportunity that offers itself to talk about his ability, fame, travels and everything else that they feel would earn him a favourable rating (see 9.3.2. below). Favourable rating is, however, not so easily manipulated. As one informant

(Kaalu Olugu) tells us, in his rating of Poet E (Echeme Ugwu of Ebem):

> Echeme is the best. Even if you come to Eziafo (i.e. the informant's village-group), you will see many of them (i.e. singers), who, by vibration you might think they do better than Ezcheme. But they don't do better than Ezcheme.
>
> Vibration? That is, when they begin to sing, you think they are doing the real job. They are not doing the real job than Echeme. If you listen to what they do, it never sounds proper. But if you want to know the bone within the thing, you will find it in Echeme. (Spoken in a mixture of Igbo and English).

The "bone within the thing" - the essence of the art of narrative war songs - is often insisted on by adept local connoisseurs like Kaalu Olugu, in their rating of singers. But for the generality of the people, ethnocentric bias often comes into play, and a singer may be given a first rating simply because he belongs to the village-group of the evaluator.

3.4.3. The Rewards of Singing

The singing of tales in Ohafia is more lucrative today than it was many years ago. Indeed, some singers (like Kaalu Igirigiri, highly-rated throughout Ohafia) have confessed in interviews that they earn more money annually from singing than from farming. Special invitations to sing at funerals, celebrations, broadcasting houses and for researchers account for these earnings. An additional source of income is the waxing of songs on phonographic discs, a new medium introduced by an Ohafia firm of record-makers (Nwosu Brothers and Company of Aba). Since the introduction of this new medium of reaching a wider audience and earning a more regular income from royalties, Poet F (Njoku Mmaju of Uduma Awoke) has produced

a long-playing record from which the texts of his songs studied here were taken, and one other singer, poet E (Echeme Ugwu of Ebem) now sees it as his life-ambition to produce a long-playing record every year, although he has produced none as yet.

But this tendency towards commercialism notwithstanding, the enjoyment of the prestige of being the spokesmen of their native community, of being the bearers of the heroic ideals of their social heritage, is still as strong an incentive to singing as ever. Coupled with this is a desire for fame akin to that which underlay the actions of heroes in the heroic age. Thus, in an informal conversation with poet B (Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon), in June 1972, he said: A chòrò m kà i mee kà afà m pùsa ìfè (I want you to see to it that my name is widely publicized).[21] So strong is this desire for fame, in the practice of the Ohafia singers, that often, after a long haggling over performance fees, in the field, most singers would normally order their men to start the music if they saw any sign that the recording of their songs might be made impossible by an excessive fee. The sheer joy of performing in the hope of ultimate fame is thus often more important than any material reward.

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21. Lit. "I want you to make it that my name comes out to light".

CHAPTER 4

THE CONTENT OF THE SONGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The varied social responsibilities of the Ohafia singers, as discussed in the foregoing Chapter (especially section 3.2), is reflected in the wide range of themes and motifs[1] contained in their songs. With only a few exceptions which we shall examine presently, most of these themes and motifs belong to the body of traditions which the Ohafia people regard as

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1. In this thesis, the terms theme and motif are employed to refer to stylized pictures of natural, historical, social or cultural reality presented in the narratives, be they in the form of the representation of an object (human characters, animals or inanimate objects) or of actions, situations or locations. But there is this difference: while the term, theme, covers all such representations of reality, motif is confined to those perspectives in the representation of reality which occur and reoccur in the traditional narrative literatures of all mankind. These are often concerned with the unusual and the striking. As Stith Thompson writes in Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, "while the term motif is used very loosely to include any of the elements going into a traditional tale, it must be remembered that in order to become a real part of tradition an element must have something about it which will make people remember and repeat it. It must be more than commonplace. A mother as such is not a motif. A cruel mother becomes one because she is at least thought to be unusual" (p.753). The following motifs (identified by the code-numbers in Thompson's Motif Index of Folk Literature, 1955) will easily be recognized in the following discussion: In the Creation Story (4.4.7), what animals are to be eaten by man (1422.0.2); In Amoogu (4.3.1 - 4.3.2) - hero of superhuman strength (F610.2), malevolent dwarf (F451.5.2), hero's extraordinary weapon (A524.2), hero professes to be able to perform a much larger task than assigned (K1741), ordeals (H220, in this case in the nest of the soldier ants), success of the unpromising hero (L160), and disenchantment by accomplishment of task (H373); In Elibe Aja - hero fights dragon/monster (B11.11, in this case the leopardess); and in Nne Mgbaafo - Woman disguises as man and enters enemy camp (K2357.6) and woman warrior (F565). It seems to me that Lord's definition of "The themes of oral poetry" as "the repeated narrative and descriptive elements" (1953:71) applies more to the concept of motif than to theme as a larger concept/...

Footnote continued on following page.

'history'[2] and commonly describe as akuko-àlì, akuko-akā, and akuko-nde-ìchìn.[3] As akuko-nde-ìchìn (stories of the ancestors), 'history' is conceived both as (a) traditions about the lives and careers of the ancestors and as (b) traditions about the origins and significance of reality as formulated by the ancestors and handed down through successive generations to the present.[4] As akuko-akā (stories of long ago), history is viewed as traditions concerned with happenings in the remote past which still exert some enduring influence on the life-styles and values of the contemporary generation. The remote past does not necessarily mean several millenia or centuries ago; it is simply the past which no one living at any particular period of time can remember at first hand. It is the days of the great great grandparents--the 'good old days'.

Every society maintains some kind of romantic attachment to the 'good old days', an epoch not necessarily fixed in time but in which men are believed to have been endowed with superior wisdom, moral attributes and physical prowess. The

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1./...embracing the motif. However, his remark that themes "function in the building of songs in much the same way as formulas function in the building of lines" seems to apply to the present Ohafia texts, as we shall see in Chapters 5 and 6 below. See also Note 13 below (page 121).

2. The English term 'history' commonly features in the testimonies of literate Ohafia informants such as the Chief mentioned in the next paragraph.

3. See Note 1, Chapter 2, Page 55above.

4. The gloss given here ('stories of the ancestors')is thus deliberately ambiguous: the stories are both about the ancestors and from them.

feeling that such an age ever existed is often enhanced, as in the case of Ohafia, where memories survive of a long period of constant struggle during which the ancestors are known to have preoccupied themselves fighting for the defence of the land against the claims of hostile forces. The fact that such an age existed in the pre-colonial history of Ohafia has been established in Chapter 1; and we have also seen how memories of the heroic mode of life of the men who inhabited that age provokes nothing but feelings of gratitude, veneration, and pride in successive generations. Associated with these feelings is the belief that men should emulate the ways of their forbears in dealing with the problems of their own age, thus keeping alive the tradition of seeking to win honour in the performance of some valuable service to the community even in the teeth of danger. In his testimony, the present chief of Asaga suggests that behind all these is gratitude to the ancestors who originally secured the land for habitation:

> When we are reminded of our past, we try to hold to our own; we try to hold to our own, and wherever we go, we return here to enjoy what our fathers have done to preserve this place for us. People lived here before (i.e. before the immigration of the founding fathers), but our fathers chased them away to inherit here. (Spoken in English).

By this it is implied that history is social charter, a charter concerned with reminding people of their right of tenure on the land, or piece of earth (ali)[5] won by their ancestors and their duty to defend the land for their own children and posterity forever.

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5. The Ohafia Igbo term, àlì (àlà in central Igbo, and àni in Northern Igbo areas) basically means "earth". Land - economic property (farmland or residential estate) or territory (fatherland, motherland, nation or country) - is also referred to as àlì because it is "a piece of the earth".

Of course no generation of men can afford to sit by and allow so valuable an economic asset as the land won by the blood, sweat and tears of their fathers to pass away without putting up a fight. Besides, in the course of time, a spiritual bond comes to be fashioned between man and the land. Every generation is nurtured by the fruits of the earth and becomes part of it after death and burial. The earth that nurtures all men, and all creation, is thus formed, in part, out of the bodies of the ancestors buried within it. On account of this, the earth itself is held in all Igbo traditions as sacred and objectified in religious belief as the goddess, Àlì (lit.Earth), the goddess of fertility, procreation and social morality, who superintends the relationships between man and man and those between the living and the dead. These relationships are embodied in òmenàlì (lit. that which is done on the land), the unwritten code of civil and sacred rules while govern the conduct of men in the community.

As akùkò-àlì[6] (lit. stories of the land, or the earth), 'history', in the Ohafia tradition, is viewed as covering various aspects of these relationships between man and the earth, viz: (a) the origins and migrations of the founding fathers and their settlement in the territory claimed by their descendants; (b) the origins and significance of the physical features of the territory; (c) the origins of the customs and beliefs of the community; and (d) the role of successive generations of warriors and ancestors in defending the land for posterity.

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6. Akuko-àlà in central Igbo and Akuko-àni in Northern Igbo areas.

There are thus four distinct cycles of stories in the historical traditions of the Ohafia people: stories pertaining to the origins of the fatherland; stories pertaining to the defence of the land inheritance; stories pertaining to the origins of customs, beliefs and cultural institutions; and, finally, stories pertaining to the origins and significance of natural phenomena. All these are rooted in fact, but they are mostly transmitted in the form of myth and legend (see EPP and Funk and Wagnall, 1965).

In the commonly accepted sense of the word, myth refers to the quasi-philosophical and pseudo-scientific attempts of the folk imagination to assign causes to reality. It seeks to explain the origins of the earth and the celestial bodies, of life and death, and of socio-cultural phenomena. It is thus quite often set in the remote past proper, in a world lost to the memory of which no living man has any direct experience. It is quasi-scientific in that it deals with questions which are the proper concerns of the natural sciences and cultural history, not objectively, but for the purposes of defending the status quo, suppressing facts that might bring shame to the community to whom it is directed, highlighting those which support established modes of life, and viewing the world throughout from the narrow perspective of the society that harbours it. In this sense, we may refer to two of the four cycles of Ohafia historical traditions as myth: stories which pertain to the origins of the significance of natural phenomena; and those which refer to the origins of the customs, beliefs and cultural institutions.

By contrast to these two cycles of mythological stories, the other two cycles of tales in Ohafia historical tradition are of the order of legend (see 4.3 below). Among these are migration legends which purport to be true accounts of the origins of the founding fathers, and heroic legends which tell of the role of successive generations of heroes (the special breed of men who live for honour) in defending the land and its heritage of posteriry.

Needless to say, it is mainly from the cycle of heroic legend that the narrative war songs draw their themes; they however often go beyond the confines of heroic legend and include references to other aspects of the whole heritage of historical tradition, especially those pertaining to the origins and migrations of the founding fathers and the deeds of statesmen and leaders who epitomise the wisdom of the tribe. In this way, of course, the singers of the songs live up to their accepted social responsibilities as traditional historians.

But the singers are also story-tellers and moralists. Their repertoires thus include many stories that do not belong to history, as the Ohafia people see it, but to the order fable (ilu). This is in addition to the narrative motifs of folktale which as we have already seen are occasioned by the very oral narrative character of the songs (section 2.4.3. above). We are referring here to the stories in Appendix I (eg Text 42) which closely resemble animal fables and creation myths in their use of animal characters or a mixture of animal, human and supernatural characters.

What is the place of these stories in a body of narrative songs that purport to be accounts of historical events? The answer is provided by the views of some informants referred

to below (section 9.3.2.4.). From these informants we gain the insight that the fable-like tales in the corpus are actually allegories or parables, which deal with some of the moral dilemmas of the men of the heroic age, in a generalized rather than the particularized fashion of the greater majority of tales in the corpus. These, like the main heroic tales are also primarily concerned with the heroic ideal of honour while satirizing those who fall short of this ideal.

The story of Nne Acho Ugo, discussed in section 4.5. below, has already been cited as a case in point (see 2.4.3. above). This, clearly, is an allegorical tale in which animal characters (five birds and their mother, Eagle) are employed in a generalized representation of the kind of outrage which can come about when individuals in a heroic society neglect their responsibilities to their mothers, in this case the duty a son owes his mother of giving her a befitting burial on the day of her death.

This overriding concern with honourable and manly behaviour is not confined to the old heroic stories or the allegories which refer to the same milieu. Today new narratives have been created by some singers around the same subject (see Text 43). In these however, the heroes and the villains are the politicians who figured in the events leading to the Biafran revolt in Nigeria (1967-1970). Thus, in the midst of rapid social change, the traditional heroic ideals are beginning to find a place in the concern of the Ohafia singers with political and social problems brought about by the emergence of wider nationalism.

4.2 HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS IN THE SONGS

The reference to contemporary political realities, in the recent compositions of the Ohafia singers, is by no means a new element of the content of the songs. An examination of the traditional heroic stories will reveal that beneath the veneer of myth, legend and fable, there are unmistakable allusions to personalities and events which are in conformity with the historical, social and cultural realia presented in Chapter I. These may be discussed here under four main headings; historical relationships between Ohafia and other major groups in the heroic age; political and commercial activities in the Cross River area during the same period; the prevailing environmental and cultural conditions; and, finally, the identity of the heroes of the songs as historical personalities.

4.2.1. Relationships Between the Ohafia and Other Major Groups in the Heroic Age

The story of Elibe Aja (Texts 17-19) is set against the background of the famous ùkwùzi relationship between the Ohafia and their wily neighbours, the Aro (see section 1.2.3. of Chapter 1). It is the story of a brave hunter who saves the Aro from the menace constituted by a leopardess in a forest close to their country (another reality of the heroic age).

It will be remembered that one provision of the ùkwùzi relationship was that the Aro should provide the Ohafia with the fire-arms and other imported European goods at their disposal while the Ohafia, on their part, committed themselves to helping the Aro defend their territory and fight their colonial wars. It is on the basis of this accord that the Aro war-chiefs approach the Ohafia, in Elibe Aja, for help, offering as an inducement precisely those commodities listed by

Dr. Uka as the "consultation fees" customarily demanded by Ohafia warriors before going to the aid of any power (1974: 79). In this case however, the Ohafia lineages stand stolidly in rebuff of Aro pleas for help despite the care taken by them to observe custom to the minutest details. Here, ùkwùzi is under question. The clue to what has gone wrong is provided by the people of Ebem. They accuse the Aro of slave-dealing and question them about the whereabouts of their countrymen "who went to the Luunya war" (EA, B1: 22-25). The reference here is to the habit, formed by the Aro, of waylaying Ohafia warriors lost in battle in a foreign territory and carting them away for sale as slaves in utter disregard to ùkwùzi (see section 1.2.3. of Chapter 1). Elibe Aja, then, must be seen in part as a record of the response of the Ohafia lineages, at a critical moment, to this Aro practice. In the end, Aro arrogance in assuming the title of Arọ̀-oke-Ìgbọ̀ (Aro, Supreme among Igbo), is deflated, and the song ends by declaiming that the Aro who claim to be supreme among the Igbo, cannot even defend themselves; Ohafia is their only hope for survival. Even their famous kinship symbol - the leopard skin - is a gift from Ohafia (see Elibe Aja, B1: 65-70).

But perhaps more significant than this assertion of Ohafia's cultural superiority to the Aro, is the implied argument that Ohafia warriors were not mercenaries kept and controlled by the Aro and whose services they could exploit as they wished; the Ohafia were rather an independent group in full control of their fighting forces and free to offer or withhold their services as they saw fit. The tale of Elibe Aja is insistent on the unanimity with which the Aro war chiefs demonstrate this communal independence, almost to the point of suggesting that the hero's ultimate decision to help the Aro at the nadir of their hopes is a betrayal of communal self-interest. This is certainly one way of looking at it; but the feeling that the hero's act of self-sacrificing valour in the services of other people redounds to the glory of Ohafia cannot be lost to any hearer of the tale.

Another aspect of the historical relationship between the Ohafia and other major groups in the heroic age is the state of constant warfare born of age-long enmity with neighbouring non-Igbo and half-Igbo groups, especially the former. A large number of the tales in the repertoires of various singers allude to this situation. The tale of Nne Mgbaafo (Texts 27 - 33) is set against the background of one of the numerous battles fought by the Ohafia and their non-Igbo Ibibio

neighbours (in this case the Nnong-Ibibio) on their common frontier. We are not told the cause of this particular encounter in any of the texts of Nne Mgbaafo recorded; however all bear witness to the intensity of the enmity between the Ohafia and their neighbours. It is her awareness of this deep hatred that makes Nne Mgbaafo attempt at first to dissuade her husband from embarking on the war.

> She said to her husband, "Please, do not go; you
> know you do not understand the Ibibio tongue!
> Ibibio people will surely kill you!
> (Nne Mgbaafo, B2: lines 7-8)

In the same way, neighbouring Igbo villagers who see Mgbaafo marching towards Ibibio territory, when eventually she decides to go in search of him, try to dissuade her from embarking on such a perilous quest; the enemy would not spare her (NM, B1: 9-25). In Inyan Olugu, the conflict is between the Ohafia and another enemy group, this time the half-Igbo "Nkalu people that spoke neither Igbo and in stammering tongue":[7]

> Amaeke Abam and Nkalu people that spoke in Igbo
> and in stammer: they were at loggerheads -
> Anyone that met his neighbour's child, killed him
> off!

In the battles that frequently erupted as a result of this mutual hatred, the toll in human lives was usually staggering by the standards of those days. Thus when her heroic quest for her husband brings her to the Asantume (Ibibio) battle-ground, in Nne Mgbaafo C1, the heroine can hardly find her way through thick mass of dead bodies (see lines 45-51):

7. Just as the ancient Romans regarded all non-Latin speaking peoples as 'barbarians', the Ohafia regarded all non-Igbo speaking as nde-mbā-nsu (People who speak in stammer).

She went on and got to that place.
The place was strewn with dead bodies!
Great-mother Mgbaafo, to every spot she came,
    she pushed over and pushed over dead bodies.
To every spot she came, she tugged and tugged at
    dead bodies.
Great-mother Mgbaafo tugged and tugged at those
    dead bodies,
To see if she could catch a glimpse of her husband.
Great-mother Mgbaafo, she went on tugging at those
    dead bodies....

Such is the typical kind of scene produced in consequence of the bitter enmity that raged on the Cross River Igbo Ibibio borderland in the pre-colonial times.

But, even in the pre-colonial past, relationships with enemy groups sometimes had their moments of peaceful cultural exchange. Thus we hear of Ekpe dancers visiting the Akunakuna country in Ogoja province, in the invocative war song, Nde Ikike Ohafia B2 (Text 2); but here, as in a parallel visit to a neighbouring half-Igbo people, recorded in Ogbaga Okorie B1 (Text 54), a peaceful exchange of this kind may turn out to be a way of ensnaring and destroying something of value to the enemy. Thus, in Ogbaga Okorie B1, the greatest dancer of the Ekpe dance ever produced by the Ohafia (as the legend goes) is persuaded to accept an invitation to perform in an enemy town, only to have his knees shattered by jealous rivals. Of course, this draws Ohafia into a war of revenge against the culprits.

The third kind of historical relationship with other groups reflected in the songs, is that with the Igbo peoples of the Igbo heartland. With these, as we have already noted, Ohafia tried to maintain friendly relationships whenever it was possible; but they did not hesitate to go to war when

they were provoked or when the situation was particularly inviting or profitable. In Amoogu C1 (Text 40 : 9-68) we have a fairly long episode in which Ohafia people send a goodwill mission to Niike on the invitation of their culture-hero, the prodigious "Short-armed-one-of-Niike". But the invitation turns out to be an excuse for trying the power of Ohafia. The host gives a great feast and makes a present of a ram to the guests and sees them off half of the way to a point where two roads meet. But before all these, he had killed a youth of his own ward and hidden his dead body at this point where two roads meet. He now throws out the headless body from where he had hidden it and accuses the Ohafia visitors of the crime; but without waiting for them to deny the charge, he assails and kills three of them. The others flee, through the bush, and return to Ohafia. The news of this treachery leads to general and spontaneous mobilization for a great war of revenge and honour against the Niike. We are told in Amoogu B1 (Text 35), that after the defeat of Niike Ishiagu, the Ohafia warriors went on the rampage: "They fell upon those Ishiagu people and massacred them / And they set fire on their homes" (lines 130-131). The "C" text of the same story evokes a more gloomy picture:

> They massacred them all
> Including suckling babes and toddling kids;
> Including queenly old women!
> (AM, C1: 231-234)

Another picture of a full-scale war of genocide is presented in Egbele B1, (Text 42).

4.2.2. Political and Commercial Activities in South-Eastern Nigeria in the 18th and 19th Centuries.

I have already referred to the slave trade in relation to Aro political manoeuvres, as it is reflected in the text of Elibe Aja B1; also in Elibe Aja, we catch a glimpse of Aro prosperity, as monopolists of the trade with the Europeans, in the rewards they offer to pay anyone that could help them kill the leopardess. The slave trade brought in goods such as guns, Sheffield matchets, ọ̀kà̀rà̀ cloth (1.2.2. above), beer, wines, shirts and tobacco. These were often bartered for salt, salt-petre, food and other locally produced goods. But trade, as reflected in the songs, was not by barter only. There are numerous references to ọ̀kpọ̀ghọ̀ - the brass rods which constituted the currency of most parts of south-eastern Nigeria up till the introduction of European type of currency at the turn of the century. On the whole, we get many interesting glimpses, mainly through epithets, of the many different kinds of trading activities which flourished in this area during most of, and especially towards the end of, the nineteenth-century. Thus we hear of nde-è̀kpu-ohù (dealers-in-slaves), nde-è̀kpu-olè (dealers-in-silver), nde-è̀bu-anwù̀rù-è̀bu-à̀kawa (dealers-in-tobacco-and-salt-petre) and nde-è̀re-ù̀be-afia (people-that-hawk-black-pears-in-the-markets).

Most of these were of course Aro, especially where the goods traded in were imported from Europe, for we know that "by their organizing genius and trading ability," the Aro "obtained charge of all the important trade routes, and of

the greater portion of the middleman's profits accruing from the barter of European goods, and ... from slave traffic" (Afigbo, 1971:4). To obtain this monopoly, they deceived the rest of the people of south-eastern Nigeria that their great Oracle of Chuku - the Ibiniukpabi - gave them "special protection" which "made it possible for them to deal directly with the white man whom they portrayed to their neighbours as evil beings whom these neighbours should avoid dealing with at all costs" (Afigbo, ibid). But while this monopoly lasted, it invited piracy from the fold of Ohafia and other Abam-Ada adventurers, who from time to time harried the trade-routes and made them so unsafe that many Aro merchants were forced to abandon the profitable trade with Europeans for the less profitable trade in local communities. Thus we hear of many brave ones of Ohafia, whose claim to greatness lies in accomplishments of this kind. There is "Father Ngwo" of Asaga, for example, who is always presented as onye-okẽ-mere-nde-èbu-anwùrù-èbu-àkawa (great-one-that-forced-tobacco-merchants-to-become-dealers-in-salt-petre); there is also "Father Olugu Ebiri", portrayed in Elibe Aja B1 as òmèrè-nde-èkpu-olè (terror-of-the-silver-merchants); and there is Ajadu Uma Ajadu of Saga, portrayed in Nde Ikike Ohafia B1 as òmèrè-nde-ère-ùbe-afia (terror-of-them-that-hawk-black-pear-in-the-markets).

4.2.3. Environment and Culture in the Heroic Age

Like the picture of the political and trading situation in the nineteenth-century, seen above, the views we get from the songs of the environmental conditions and life-styles of

Ohafia during the same period, are in consonance with the known facts. Interestingly, the two animals fought by the hunter-hero, in Elibe Aja B1 - namely the leopardess and the bush-hog - are precisely the two principal types of wild life, whose attacks on Ohafia, as we saw in Chapter 1, helped to foster the heroic age of the people (see 1.2.2. above). Similarly, we get true-to-life descriptions of the geographical environment of the local settlements of particular lineages, such as Okon, which is described in Elibe Aja B1 as

> Hilly country on the bank of the River, the
> people that live themselves alone (EA, B1:39)

Okon is in fact one of the most isolated of the Ohafia lineages, located, as the epithet says, in a hilly country close to the Cross River itself.

Tied up with the true-to-life observations of local environmental conditions are the equally true-to-life observations of the customs and practices of the inhabitants of various localities. Thus, the people of Okon are presented, as they are, even today, as "People that are well-versed in medicine, even their women" (EA, B1: 40). In the same way, the people of Asaga, whose name (as we saw in Chapter 1),[8] alludes to their reputation for fearlessness, are invoked as follows:

> Offspring-of-Awa-son-of-Ezema-Elechi, giant
> community of gigantic people ...
> Who in their outward journey crush the python
> under their heels,
> And on their homeward journey flash their hands
> in disdain of the adder,
> Saying: What did the python do to us that the
> adder can do? (EA, B1:44-48)

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8. Note 27, p.23.

Other lineages are accurately identified in terms of their local taboos or totemic beliefs. Thus, Ekidi-Nde-Ofoali is presented as

> People that rear lizards like goats;[9]
> Who when their man is killed do not avenge but
> rise in vengeance when their lizard is killed
> (EA, B1: 29-30)

Others, such as Niike Ishiagu, are presented in terms of their local crafts. Thus in the various versions of Amoogu, we hear of Ishiagu-akpu-ite-akpu-mgbere (Ishiagu people, makers-of-pots-and-what-not) - an accurate picture of a people, who are even today still acknowledged as the leading makers of water pots in southern Nigeria as a whole. More will be said of these particular references to people and places as part of the discussion of the epithet formulas of the songs, in Chapter 5, below.

4.2.4 The Heroes of the Songs as Historical Personalities

Although no references to the heroes of the songs have been found in any archival or written source, they are in fact - like the heroes of heroic narrative poetry elsewhere - genuine historical personalities. They are remembered as such by most people in Ohafia and no one confuses them with the purely fictional characters in ilu (fables). It is true that some fabular animals, like the River-dog (see KI's testimony in section 9.2.2. below) are regarded as having actually existed, there is not as much agreement on the matter as there is in the case of the heroes of the songs.

But there is more positive evidence of the historicity

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9. Lizards are not killed in Ekidi-Nde-Ofoali because they are the totems of the community.

of the heroes of the songs in the fact that many old men above the age of seventy-five interviewed in the field claimed to be, and are widely recognized by their kindreds and indeed by many influential persons from other areas as, descendants of some of the heroes or of their lieutenants. One of the most enthusiastic informants in the field, was Nna Eke Ojaa of Asaga, the patrician of the heroine, Nne Mgbaafo. He is generally recognized as the son of a man called Ojaa, believed to have accompanied Mgbaafo in her subsequent trips after her famous journey to an Ibibio battlefield. His father is said to have earned the title Ojaa (he that tears off limbs), because in one of his journeys with Nne Mgbaafo, he intercepted a strong man from a hostile village, killed him, chopped off his head and at one stroke tore off his right arm. But though this smacks of legend, Nna Eke Ojaa and other members of his extended family have been very careful to preserve the actual house in which Ojaa and Nne Mgbaafo lived, and in it, many relics of their personal belongings. Similarly, in the heroine's matriclan, the queen-mother still keeps the sacred ancestral pots erected in her honour.

Not only Nne Mgbaafo, other heroes of the songs are remembered in the same way by their descendants, and in many cases their ụdụdụ and images in the ọbu of their lineages are well-preserved. Of course, such monuments can only be erected by a sane community to real, human ancestors.

There is of course legend, as we shall see below,

in the stories of women warriors who redeem their husbands in Nne Mgbaafo and Inyan Olugu. But these, like the legends that have grown around such extraordinary women as the French Joan of Arc, always have an historical base. We know from Equiano (1789:40) and other writers that the participation of women in wars was in fact not deviant, but part of a generally existing situation all over the Igbo country, in the olden days.

4.3. THE LEGEND OF THE HEROIC AGE

Legend is, however, ultimately the perspective from which the stories of the great ancestors are narrated. Legend, like myth, invests human heroes in literature with super-natural powers. But unlike myth, it presents them nevertheless as human characters who differ from their fellows in the infinitesimal range of their powers. Its material may include the wildest exaggeration invented by the folk imagination, but such exaggeration is absolutely essential for the purposes of portraying the ancestral generation of the heroic age as men and women, who "in the splendour and scope of their achievements" cannot be equalled by succeeding generations.

4.3.1. Legend of the Invincible Short-armed Dwarf of Niike

The figure of the invincible, Short-armed-one of Niike, the dwarf, Omiko, in Amoogu (Texts 21-25), is a typical legendary figure. He is the type of invincible hero whose powers derive from magic and who cannot be despatched without a special weapon containing a specially-prepared charm-breaker. The preparation of such a weapon is usually a ritualistic affair. In

Amoogu, it constitutes a major theme - the trial of the braves in the nest of soldier-ants. The idea that the Short-armed dwarf, can only be killed by a gun charged by a man capable of charging twelve guns sitting in a nest of soldier-ants, is based on magical principles. As J.G. Frazer has pointed out:

> If we analyse the principles of thought on which magic is based, they will probably resolve themselves into two: first, that like produces like, or that an effect resembles its cause; and, second, that things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed. The former principle may be called the Law of Similarity, the latter the Law of Contact or Contagion. From the first of these principles, namely the Law of Similarity, the magician infers that he can produce any effect he desires merely by imitating it: from the second he infers that whatever he does to a material object will affect equally the person with whom the object was once in contact, whether it formed part of his body or not. Charms based on the Law of Similarity may be called Homoeopathic or Imitative Magic. Charms based on the Law of Contact or Contagion may be called Contagious Magic.
>
> (Frazer, 1922:11)

The charm-breaking gun produced through the ordeal of sitting naked in a nest of soldier-ants thus combines both Homoeopathic and Contagious magic: Homoeopathic, in the sense that, by the Law of Similarity, the carrier of the gun would acquire the resilient invulnerability of a man capable of going through the ordeal without a wince; Contagious, in the sense that, by the Law of Contact, the gun itself would produce the effect of the multi-million needle-bites of soldier-ants, which are also used traditionally to manufacture "lethal" ant-bombs.

It is usually necessary to mobilize such

forces, because, legendary heroes such as the Niike dwarf, so far as they feature in folk literature, are generally personified objects in a state of inertia: they remain unmoveably stationary or inarrestibly in motion until they are opposed or counterbalanced by an equal or greater force, hence the elaborate ritual of producing magical counter-forces.

Unusually powerful dwarfs, such as those seen in Chapter 1 (section 1.4.1), feature commonly in Ohafia legend; but in general, the folk imagination tends to relish the idea of a man of small stature who is able to confound normal human beings with his unusual powers. Such figures are much more fascinating as heroes than giants. But giant or dwarf, the figure of the invincible antagonist is of special relevance to heroic poetry, for it provides the ideal kind of force, in the annihilation of which, ordinary men or women are best defined as heroes among punier mortals.

4.3.2. Legend of the Low-born Monster-killer, Amoogu

The dwarf or the giant in legend is a monster. Like the Niike dwarf, he may have human attributes, but in other instances, he may combine human attributes with the attributes of the brute and/or the dreadful spirit. But the man who kills him, or prepares the ground for his annihilation, is almost always an ordinary human. So is Amoogu, the low-born farmer from the small and insignificant lineage of Amuma, whose act of endurance meets the demands for the making of the magical gun used against the Niike monster. In a way, Amoogu is the folk messiah - the "stone rejected by

the builders" risen to become "the head of the corner". In the initial list of heroes who come forward to try charging the gun, he is not anywhere near being mentioned. And when at last he appears, in the "B" texts, he is questioned rather haughtily and sceptically by the older heroes as to his lineage-origins. The small village of Amuma - indeed the smallest in the whole of Ohafia - never produced a notable. So the elders have reason to question his ability to accomplish what they have themselves all failed to accomplish. But the situation is a desperate one. So they let him, and discover to their surprise, how easily he goes through the ordeal.

The folk messiah in legend is usually a sun-hero. His glory is diurnary although it has the brilliance and splendour of the sun. He arises out of the darkness of a desperate situation bringing light to his people. He quickly reaches the zenith and dies with the splendour of the setting sun. It is perhaps significant in this respect that in Text B2 of Amoogu, the Ohafia folk messiah, Amoogu, is presented as ìkpaàkpà (maize):

Maize does not ripen on a sapling stem! (line 2)

"Maize", in general Igbo symbology, signifies transient beauty. It is Òkoro toro n'afò laa n'afò (Youth that grows up in a year and dies in the year).[10] There is a universal truth in the argument implied by the presentation of the folk messiah as a transient beauty destroyed by the community of which he is a redeemer. In the final act, in Amoogu, the hero is killed by jealous comrades-in-arms. Humanity

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10. A popular Igbo riddle.

is myopic and apt to destroy its own best hope. The consequence of this is continuing tragedy for man.

But perhaps the most important facet of the figure of the low-born folk messiah is his appeal to us as a type of republican hero - the kind of hero fostered by egalitarian, non-monarchial societies. Generally among the Igbo the greatness of man is measured not in terms of his ancestry but in terms of his own personal achievement. In view of this, the less dependant on the support of spiritual forces or on luck, a hero proves to be, the more he is admired. Amoogu is such a hero.

4.3.3. Legend of the Hunter, Elibe Aja, Who Fights the Beasts Single-handedly

Elibe Aja is another typical legendary hero. He is of the genus of the Anglo-Saxon Beowulf - the fearless hunter who fights and destroys the brutish monster in a single-combat. His story as told in Elibe Aja B1 is in many ways similar to that of the Beowulf epic. After getting rid of the Leopardess that harries Aro country and killing her cub as well, he dies in an attempt later in his life to get rid of another brute in another country, this time a bush-hog.

4.3.4. Legend of Man-like Female Warriors, Nne Mgbaafo and Inyan Olugu

Both Nne Mgbaafo and Inyan Olugu are informed by the same kind of legend - the legend of the man-like female warrior who surprises her generation by taking up arms and marching to battle, fighting even more ferociously than men. Igbo legend has it that women became burdened with breasts

in the course of evolution because it proved necessary to curb their primeval physical superiority over men, as it was threatening the safety of the world owing to their comparatively little intelligence. But from time to time, such primeval types of women re-appear. Their action is thoughtless, but full of emotion. Thus behind the heroic search of Nne Mgbaafo for her husband and the trick by which Inyan Olugu wins heads in battle for her husband, lies the same kind of emotive force - love.

4.3.5. The Legend of the Origins of Ohafia

But by far the most important legend in the texts is that contained in versions of Akuko bairi ibe Ohafia zhia bia (Story of the origin of Ohafia). As already indicated above (note 9, Chapter 1), this legend appears to have sprung from, and generally conforms to, the tradition that the founding fathers of Ohafia came originally from Ibeku (near the modern railway town of Umuahia), but it also contains other elements which seem to be part of a general tendency in heroic cultures to use heroic poetry to claim great ancestry. Thus in one of the versions citedin Appendix II (Text II), Hebrew origins is claimed for the Igbo generally and Benin origins for the Ohafia. But here, the claim of Hebrew origin is apparently based on an identity of sound:

> We, Igbo, we are of the Hebrew stock:
> We are of the Hebrew stock!
> Igbo is the same as Hebrew:
> Igbo - Ibo - Hebrew! (Text 11: Lines 1-4)

4.3.6. Other Legendary Elements

There are other legendary elements in other stories not as fully developed as those dealt with above. We hear, for example, of Nna Kamalu Olugu Ebiri/Obilazu-ka-oso-agba (Great father Kamalu

Olugu Ebiri/Hunch-back-that-runs-faster-than-his-peers). Kamalu Olugu Ebiri belongs to the genus of legendary heroes, whose valour or dexterity fascinates because they are able to excel in spite of a physical deformity that would otherwise have rendered them invalid. There is also the ancestor of Asaga, Awa Ezema Elechi, portrayed as Ọ̀gba-egbè-ugwu-firi (Firer-of-guns-through-a-refuse-mound). He is a type of the redoubtable marksman valued by a military state for his skill with guns. Other legendary heroes include the human trickster-hero, Ukurube (Text 57), the wrestlers (Texts 54-55), the doctors (37-37) the dancer of the Ekpe dance (50), and the hunters (eg Texts 17-20)

4.4. THE MYTHIC IMAGE

As indicated in the introductory section (4.1. above), the mythical elements found in the stories of the songs belong to two cycles of Ohafia historical traditions which deal with the origins of the world and of social and cultural phenomena. In some of these, the heroes are portrayed as the cause of the origins of traditional symbols, rites and customs as having played a role in the events leading to their origins. In some other stories, they are presented solely in their status as divine ancestors or even simply as spirits come to live among men, bringing with them something of value to the community. Finally, some other stories seek to justify various aspects of the existing social system by tracing their origins back to the beneficient actions of particular heroes.

4.4.1. Myth of the Origins of Palm-wine

In the narrative passages of the invocative song, Nde

Ikike Ohafia Bl, we have an allusion to the myth of the origin of palm-wine - the story of "the people that brought palm-wine to this world" (lines 131-138).

4.4.2. Myth of the Origin of the Omo-Omoo Cow

A second myth in Nde Ikike Ohafia Bl, is the myth of the origin of the Omo-Omoo Cow, believed to have been brought to the light of the human world by the great ancestor, Omoo, a spirit come to live among men:

> My great father Omoo, Spirit!
> He dragged a cow all the way from the spiritland
> to the light of the human world.
> My great father Omoo, Spirit,
> Dragged a cow all the way from the spiritland to
> the light of the human world.
> They questioned who it was that tethered that
> cow there?
> They replied that it was my great father Omoo:
> It was for this reason they have come to call it
> "Omo-Omoo Cow". (NIO, Bl: 140-146)

In the next three lines, we find that part of the purpose of this myth is to justify the custom of demanding cattle in settlement of bride price among the hero's patrilineage (Aka-Aka).

> He was a person of the Lineage of Aka-Aka,
> Offspring of the Lineage whose daughters are
> married with cattle.
> My great father Omoo was in fact a spirit.

4.4.3. Myth of the Origin of the Aro Kingship Symbol

Although the story of Elibe Aja is set against the background of genuine historical events, as we saw in section 4.2.1 above, the claim that the Leopard-Skin which is the kingship symbol of the Aro up till today, is the skin of that leopardess shot by Elibe Aja, is clearly mythological. There

is no historical evidence for this. It belongs to the class of nationalist myths created out of the desire of one group to assert its superiority over another dominant group with whom it is in competition. Myths of this kind are of wide occurrence and even form part of the idiom of contemporary nationalist journalism.

4.4.4. Myth of the Origin of the Art of War Songs

There are more conventional myths, which seek to explain the origins of customs and existing social phenomena. Egbele B1, for example, sets out from the opening lines to account for the origins of the art of singing war songs (lines 1-6). We may regard this as myth since there are alternative myths purporting to account for the origin of the same art (see 2.2.3 and 2.3.2 above).

4.4.5. Myth of the Origin of the Rite of Decorating the Head of the Dead With Eagle-plumes

Nne Acho Ugo, a story which by all standards is fable with a parabolic meaning (see 4.1 above and 4.5.1 below), ends surprisingly as a myth purporting to account for the custom of decorating the heads of the dead with eagle-plumes before they are buried. In her lifetime, Nne Acho Ugo (Mother Eagle) has four sons: Ugo (Eagle), Nkwo (Hawk), Egbe (Kite), Akpala (Sunbird) and Oturukpokpo (Wood-pecker). These boast among themselves how lavishly they would honour their mother on the day "she would return to spiritland" (i.e. on the day of her death). Soon, their mother dies, but none of them shows up. A delegation of birds is sent to search them out in their natural habitats, but each gives

one lame excuse or another why he cannot descend to the earth. At last, the birds come to the habitat of Ugo (Eagle), on the silk-cotton tree. They take him unawares, pluck two big feathers from his wings and with these they adorn the head of the dead mother. Thus the song ends:

> This is the reason why the heads of the dead are adorned with eagle-plumes,
> And they wear them on their way back to the land of the spirits.
> It is an inheritance from Mother Acho Ugo:
> Mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele. (NAU, B1:77-80)

It is difficult to reconcile the fact that actions in the world of animals can give rise to such an important custom among the living. But this kind of syllogistic argument is a stock-in-trade of creation myths.

4.4.6. Myth Concerning the Depopulation of the Patrilineage of Amuma

Like Nne Acho Ugo, some versions of Amoogu end on a mythic note. It is here deduced by syllogistic reasoning of the kind referred to above, that since Amuma is the smallest of Ohafia patrilineages and since so many people were crushed by the silk-cotton tree informed by the vengeful spirit of the assassinated hero, Amoogu, the sparse population of the patrilineage is the consequence of the mass-slaughter of so many sacrilants: thus in Amoogu B1, we are told:

> That is the reason why Amuma is so short of people -
> It is the hand of the spirit of Amoogu son of Ologho Ikpo! (AM, B1: 195-196)

And in Amoogu C1, we are told:

> The silk-cotton tree fell and killed them all.
> That is the reason why they are as few as they are today! (AM, C1: 361-362)

4.4.7. The Creation Myth

In addition to the creation motifs, in the texts discussed above, two of the Ohafia singers of tales have in their repertoires a story which purports to account for the origins of the world. But as we can see from the version given in the Appendix I (version F1: Text 1), this is hardly the story of the creation of the world. Although it begins in the manner of the story of Genesis (Chapter I) with the creation of woman from the rib of man, its focal interest is on the failure of a complaint made by the beasts of the forest to Chukwu Obiama (God, the Merciful)

against the licence given to humans to hunt, kill and eat their kind. At the close of the story, it becomes clear that the purpose of the story is to present hunting as a mode of survival ordained by God himself, thus reminding men of their duty to hunt, not only for food but for the defence of the community.

It would indeed appear that the first part of this story is an additional element introduced from the Biblical tradition by Poet F, for in versions given of the same myth from Poet B the same story is told as Ife Meeni Chineke Kwere ana-egbu anu (Why God approved the hunting of wild animals) by Poet B omitting the creation of woman from the ribs of man. However, the F version is by no means another or an exact reproduction of the Biblical myth. There is neither a temptation nor a fall; rather, what is stressed is the origin of 'love between man and woman' and of the superior capacity of humans to survive in a world which they share with the lower animals, the inhabitants of the forest.

4.5. FABLE AS ALLEGORY

A typical example of the use of a fable in an allegorical manner, as pointed out in section 4.1 above, will be found in the story of Nne Acho Ugo (Text 64). On the surface, Nne Acho Ugo is an animal story: the story of five birds and their mother. As in fables, the characterization of the participants and the setting of their actions are based on the observed habits of animals in nature and on local ecological conditions. Thus, at the beginning of the story, we are told of Nne Acho Ugo and her sons:

> The first person she begat, it is Ugo (Eagle).
> She took Ugo, went and placed him on a silk-cotton tree.
> She then begat Nkwo (Hawk).
> She took Nkwo, went and placed him in the crevice of a tree.
> She then begat Egbe (Kite).
> She took Egbe, went and placed him -
> She said to Egbe, "Your dwelling-place shall be the top of the silk-cotton tree.
> She then begat Akpala (Sunbird), the bluffing dancer.
> Akpala son of Acho Ugo, he went on dancing.
> She then begat Oturukpokpo (Woodpecker), son of Acho Ugo.
> Oturukpokpo son of Acho Ugo went on pecking all created trees. (NAU, B1: 4-14)

As the story develops, we see that the natural habits of the animals provide a consistent frame of reference for the study of such vices as greed, boastfulness, undependableness, folly and vanity in human beings. Thus, for instance, Akpala (Sunbird) features throughout as a symbol of vanity, sloth and foolish irresponsibility. He has no other concern in life but dancing; and it is his dancing habit that brings him into conflict with the children whose pattern-drawing he despoils; but this he cannot restore since he is also artless. The foolish, unthinking bird he is, he is content to give this as the excuse for not going "to see his (dead)

mother":

He said he was dancing awhile ago
On a ground where some children had drawn
beautiful patterns;
That he had spoilt the beautiful patterns
they drew,
And that he did not know how to draw such
beautiful patterns:
If he descended to the ground, the boys
would surely capture him,
And they would require him to draw such
beautiful patterns for them:
He could therefore not go to see his mother.
(NAU, B1: 54-60)

The other birds are similarly in trouble with humans or other animals: Egbe (Kite) and Nkwo(Hawk) for carrying off a toad and a fowl respectively, and Oturukpokpo (Woodpecker) for pecking at an object whose identify is lost in a lacuna at this point in the text. There is a vice for each of the birds: greed, for the birds of prey; noisiness and boastfulness, for the Woodpecker. Finally, in Ugo (Eagle), we have the thoughtless and vain, beautiful one, who, while all others are boasting of the great things they would do for their mother on the day of her death can think of nothing other than his beauty:

They, five of them, burst out boasting among
themselves,
Concerning the ways they would honour their
mother, when she would be on her way back
to the land of spirits.
Ugo, son of Acho Ugo, boasted he was the most
beautiful of them all!
Of all created fowls-of-the-air, he was the
most beautiful. (NAU, B1: 16-19)

Ironically in the end, he inadvertently honours his mother with his beauty, for when the delegation of birds arrive at his habitat, he flies out (in ideophonic terms) werere (i.e. in this context, thoughtlessly):

He flew out of that silk-cotton tree, werere.
They quickly captured him.
They plucked a quill from this wing, plucked
another from that.
And they reasoned: Is it right that your
mother should return to the land of spirits
with empty hands?
They took those two plumes from him and adorned
the head of Mother Acho Ugo with them.
(NAU, B1: 69-73)

There is something akin to the mode of the bestiary in this kind of fable which lends it easily to parabolic or allegorical interpretation. The bestiary is a genre of traditional oral literature in Medieval Europe, which seems to have come from the Physiologus of the Second-century Rome through translations from the Greek and Latin originals by the Christians of Alexandria. It was a class of narrative, the purpose of which "was to convey moral and religious instruction through expositions of the actual and supposed natural history of both living and fabulous creatures of the animal world, beasts, birds, fish, insects. In form they are stereotyped: first the description, then the allegorical interpretation and application" (Renwick and Orton, 1939: 435). In Nne Acho Ugo, however, the description, and the parabolic interpretation and application are integrated in a closely-knit dramatic narrative. The five birds and their mother are masks. Through them, the songs castigate anti-heroical behaviour in a society that adores mothers.

But it is not only out of fables that the Ohafia singer creates allegories or parables. He occasionally does so by means of incidents drawn from real life.

The vignette about Ucha Aruodo and her humiliation

when she goes to fend for her only child, is a parable apparently created out of a real incident (Texts 21 - 25). Although the heroine is indentified precisely by matrikin and patrikin, what is emphasized in the story is not the event but its significance. On the whole, it seems to say: it is far better to suffer humiliation fighting for your own child, even if it is a female child, than face the humiliation that awaits childless mothers in death. As Ucha Aruodo tells her daughter, in version B2:

> 'You know very well that no one ever fights the fight of a child that has power,
> 'No one ever fights the fight of a child that has power:
> 'When a person dies,
> 'If she has no child, no one ever washes into the crevice of her buttocks.
> 'That is the reason why I went. (UA, B1: 21-25)

Everyone desires to bear a male child - nwa ike di (a child that has power) - who would be her protector in her old age. But in the case of Ucha Aruodo, her child comes to her when she is already well-advanced in age and it happens to be a girl, who she has to protect rather than receive protection from. But she accepts the situation philosophically. A child is a child even if it is a girl. To bear a child, no matter what his sex is, is to fulfil one's humanity, It is the woman's path to honour, for "a person that has no child is not a human being!" (UA, B1: 23)

4.6. THE UNIFYING SUBJECT MATTER[11]

Clearly, from the foregoing sections, the unifying subject matter of the Ohafia war songs is the heroic ideal of honourable behaviour. Thus, whether the texts are straight-

11. While motif (note 1 above) refers to a recurrent and archetypal theme, subject matter refers to an abstract expression of a dominant theme in a narrative or a corpus of narratives.

forward accounts of historical events or imaginative recreations of reality in the idiom of myth, legend and allegory, each is in the final analysis the drama of a heroic personality whose actions are motivated by the desire to win honour through the display of valour even at the risk of death. This overriding quest for honour, as we shall see in the present section, operates on four distinct levels: there is the quest for personal honour; there is the quest for family honour; there is the quest for the honour of the lineage; and there is finally the quest for the honour of the community as a whole. At every level, this quest is intermeshed with a whole range of other moral attitudes and positions.

4.6.1. The Quest for Personal Honour

On one level, the apparent motive force behind the quest of the heroes for personal honour is the desire in each hero to ensure his place in the rank of honourable warriors (ufiem) and to eschew the humiliation that follows dishonourable cowards (ujọ̄) to their graves.

In their handling of this major subject, the songs present two contrasting types of characters: the motivated hero who willingly stands up to the challenge of his time without question, and the archetypal coward who seems to lack all motivation, hence embodying all the negative attitudes deplored by his society.

A typical example of the former kind of character is Ndukwe Emeuwa, the husband of the heroine, Nne Mgbaafo. Ndukwe Emeuwa is a man of his times who does not require any

prompting before he sets out to win a head in battle. In Nne Mgbaafo C1 (Text 32), we are told that he begins life, like all men of honour, by saving up a good sum of money and marrying a respectable woman from a good family. Then, without waiting to be reminded of his duty to his society, he plunges into war as soon as the first opportunity offers itself. The single-mindedness with which he embarks on this quest for honour is underlined in Text B2 by his rejection of the womanish pleas of his wife to stay back lest he be killed by the ferocious Ibibio warriors. Unfortunately, Ndukwe Emeuwa fails in his quest for distinction in the war and is even captured (as some texts say, killed) by the enemy; but his very determination to go against all the odds is presented as typifying the assertive and heroic individualism of his age. Ultimately, his venture is not without avail, for it is the cause of one of the most remarkable displays of female 'chivalry' in all literature - his wife's quest for him in enemy territory, in the course of which she sheds her old womanish fears and impelled by love marches heroically to the enemy and boldly demands to see her husband or die where he may be lying in death (see section 4.6.2. below).

Counterpointed against Ndukwe Emeuwa is the archetypal coward, Itenta Ogbulopia, the husband of the heroine Inyan Olugu, in the texts which bear her name (Texts 22-26). Itenta Ogbulopia is in fact a kind of rebel against the established social order. He not only fails to win a head in battle when others in his age-set had done so, he even seems

content to remain that way. In fact, Itenta Ogbulopia is not a proper name. It is a mock-heroic title which means "Small pot, killer in fiddling", and it is in this light that he is presented all through the tale. Although, in the end, his wife wins four heads on his behalf in yet another display of female 'chivalry' in the songs, he remains true to type by flatly refusing to acknowledge the encomiums showered on him by the members of his age-grade in a ceremony held to confer the ufiem title on him:

> The braves of his village came to chant in praise of him: 'Itenta Ogbulopia!'
> But he said to them: Please, do not chant in praise of me;
> Rather chant in praise of Inyan Olugu, Killer-that-gives-the-honour-to-her-husband....
> (IO, B1: 27-30)

The quest for personal honour is not confined to the battle-ground. It is also actively pursued in the homestead by women, whose real role in the society is that of farming the land and guarding the homestead when the men are busily engaged on the battlefields. The vignette, Ucha Aruodo discussed in section 4.5. above is concerned with this level of the quest. The humiliation she suffers when she goes to fend for her only child is nothing when set against the fact of having put up a fight in her defence. Besides, the child, though female, is her only claim to honour as a woman.

A second major aspect of the quest for personal honour in the songs is the desire of each hero to win fame and immortality in recognition of his actions on behalf of the community. It is this desire that underlies the adventures of the hunter-hero, Elibe Aja (Texts 9-11). It may be argued

that anyone rendering service to the rich Aro war lords in that era of Aro prosperity cannot escape the charge of mercenarism; but as we have noted (4.2.1), Elibe Ája does not gain anything from the Aro. As soon as his mission is complete, he simply returns to his kindred without waiting for any reward. But even if he had anything to gain from the Aro, little else was to be gained but fame and immortality from Amuru, the poor village-group in which he meets his death while fighting a bush-hog.

The desire for fame also underlies the ordeal suffered by the hero of Amoogu in the nest of soldier-ants. Although the winning of fame leads this hero to his death, as in the case of Elibe Aja, death does not obliterate his memory. The jealous comrades-in-arms who assassinate the hero come to a bad end and bring the curse of depopulation on their age-group, but the hero lives on in the annual Orie Oke Ji Festival in which his phenomenal rise to heroic status is re-enacted in a communal ritual drama.

4.6.2. The Quest for Family Honour

The family in Ohafia, as in all other Igbo communities, extends beyond the narrow confines of the relationship between parents and their children (the nuclear family); it is the extended family which includes such relatives as cousins, uncles and even inlaws, both in the matrilineages and in the patrilineages. Some of the actions of the heroes of the narrative war songs are presented in a way to suggest that they are motivated by the participants' desire to defend or uphold the honour of members of their extended families.

In this connection, two typical situations involving two different types of Amazonian women in what I have referred to above as female 'chivalry' may be considered. The two women in question are Nne Mgbaafo (Text 27) and Inyan Olugu (Text 22).

Love is the sole motive force behind the actions of these two women. When Nne Mgbaafo loses her husband in the wars she is motivated by intense conjugal love to defy the perils of battle in a determined effort to seek him out or die wherever he may be lying in death. Attempts to dissuade her from embarking on such a perilous quest fail because she can imagine no other life without her beloved husband. As she declares in Text B2:

> ...I will go in search of my husband at Nnong Ibibio,
> And if I do not find him, I will never more return:
> Where can one find another man that can love so tenderly;
> He is my husband and the husband of all my relatives!
> (NM, B2: 18-21)

And in Text B1, she tells those who try to stop her on the way:

> My husband is a good husband;
> It is a good husband I am married to:
> If I do not see my husband, I would rather sleep wherever he may be sleeping now! (NM, B1: 14-16)

The same kind of intense conjugal love lies behind the action of the heroine of Inyan Olugu. There is perhaps something callous in this woman. She insists on drawing a proven coward and idler into the risky venture of raiding palm-trees in an enemy territory. In the foregoing however one can see the image of a devoted wife, whose sole concern is not to embarrass her husband, as would seem to be the case,

but to give honour and dignity to a weak husband. Her purpose is clearly stated at the beginning of version B1:

> Her husband won no head in battle,
> But she vowed she would win a head in battle and confer the honour on her husband! (IO, B1: 4-5)

Women of less nobility of character would have absconded. (see 1.2.4 above). But she does not.

It is on account of the reversal of roles in these two tales that I have spoken above of female 'chivalry' in the songs. Both tales have all the paraphernalia of romance, but with 'chivalry' reversed, the women acting as the brave 'knights' who go to battle to rescue their lost 'maidens', the honour of their husbands. At the end of the day, the glory of the women's exploits redounds on their families, as we can see in the invocation at the close of Inyan Olugu B1

> She was a person of Eyen,
> Sister of Ima Orie of Ezhiaku:
> It is the lineage of Eyen that caused a husband to be extolled! (IO, B1: 33-35)

Other heroic acts in which family honour is implied or specifically mentioned involve the delicate relationships between sons and mothers in the mother-venerating Ohafia society. It may well be that this is part of the widespread emphasis on the relationship between mothers and sons in African tales; but there is added significance in its manifestation in the present Ohafia tales an account of what we know to be the strong emphasis on matrilineal kinship ties in the Ohafia double-descent system (1.3.1 above).

We have already referred to the case of Ucha Aruodo (though this involves a mother and an only daughter who represents a son for her); in other instances, the joys and

sorrows of the mothers are brought about by the successes and failures of their sons, and these are expressed in passages of intense lyrical beauty. See Egbele (Texts 42-45), Amoogu (Texts 35-41), and Ucha Aruodo (Texts 46-48). Even in the animal world, as we can glean from Elibe Aja Bl (Texts 17-19) there is a hint that the same kind of relationship between the Leopardess and her cub is the sole motivation for her raid on the Aro community (lines 58-64).

Of course, the role of fathers is not neglected completely, as we can see in Egbele Bl in which the wife's admonition of the paterfamilias over-rides the delicate sentiments of a thrice bereaved mother.

4.6.3. The Quest for the Honour of the Lineage

The fact that the honour of the deeds of heroes redound to the glory of their ancestors is evidenced by the tendency in the songs to identify them by means of associative epithets linking them to lineages whose patronymic titles contain the names of these ancestors. To make this kind of association, as we have already seen in one of the testimonies quoted in the last chapter is the basis of the numerous hero-lists in the narratives, for example those in the variant texts of Amoogu.

Quite often, in the hero-lists, a balance is struck between the double-descent affiliations of the hero, with the implication that the glory of his achievements are also those of his two lineages. In Nne Mgbaafo B2, for example, the heroine is presented as follows at the very beginning of the text:

Young woman!
Person of (the patrilineage of) Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi:
Mgbaafo Kalu is her name.
She is a person of (the matrilineage of) Eleghe
Ofoka... (NM, B2: 1-4)

The argument that the exploits of heroes are for the honour of their lineages is not merely implied in the hero-lists, it is sometimes stated overtly in the singer's own commentary on the events. Thus, at the end of Inyan Olugu B1 we are urged to take note of the lineages of this brave woman who accomplishes so heroic a deed for the glory of the deed is in fact theirs (lines 33-40).

4.6.4. The Quest for the Honour of the Community as a Whole

Like most other independent confederations of village-groups in Igbo country, Ohafia regards itself, and behaves, as a nation, i.e. as a people with a distinctive culture, history, social system, even peculiar environmental conditions, and above all, a recognizable esprit de corps or spirit of community. It is the spirit of community that binds the members of the 'nation' together in what may be described as Ohafia 'nationalism', the feeling of pride in the past achievements of their community, faith in its present way of life and hope in its future survival. This 'nationalism' is the ultimate motivation for action in the Ohafia heroic world as we can see from the unity of purpose exhibited by the heroes of Ohafia in Amoogu in their fight against the Short-armed-one of Niike. All come forward willingly and enthusiastically to suffer the ordeal of charging guns in a nest of soldier-ants, if that would save the honour of their nation. When in the end they suc-

ceed, it is spoken of, not as the success of the man Amoogu who ultimately charges the guns but that of Ohafia as a whole.

The fallacy has been built up, in, for example, the Chadwicks (1932-40, Vol. i: 92-94), that the individualism of the heroes of heroic poetry necessarily precludes any feelings of nationalism, or of loyalty to lineage or to the family. We have already seen the opposite to be the case in the ties between heroes and their families and lineages in the present Ohafia texts. The same is true of their nationalist sentiments, their attachment of their community. In this regard, it must not be forgotten that the roots of the Ohafia practice of head-hunting and the heroic code that evolved as a consequence of it lie deep in the early struggles of the people, as a community to defend themselves. Heroic individualism came later, but then only as an expression of the ideal of the society.

It is clear from the foregoing that what the Ohafia war songs seek to represent is not historical fact but an image of history which has the best chance of supporting cherished traditional values and inspiring people to live by them. These values are heroic and they are embodied in historical personalities whose lives, careers and actions are judged to be the most exemplary.

As we shall see in the next Chapter, this heroic image is evoked by a system of formulas the effectiveness of which derives from their dynamic symbolism, picturesque imagery and pithy allusiveness to the geographical, historical, social and cultural realia against which the songs are set.

PART II

LANGUAGE, STRUCTURE AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

CHAPTER 5

THE LANGUAGE OF THE SONGS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

On the surface, the language of the songs is much the same as the language of everyday social communication in Ohafia. It is dialectal, straightforward and devoid of esoteric symbolism, involved imagery and obscure allusions. From the point of view of the singers and local connoisseurs, it is important that the language of the songs should possess these qualities. Dialect is associated with the appeal of the songs to the nationalist sentiments referred to in the last Chapter. Thus we are told by the singer, Egwu Kaalu of Asaga, that one of the reasons why the songs are so popularly enjoyed by the Ohafia people is because "they are composed in our native tongue" (asụ̀sụ ọ̀lị̀ ọ̀nyị). The possession of a distinctive dialect is of course one of the most important attributes which mark out the various confederations of village-groups in Igbo country as distinctive national communities. This is not only because it enables the members of the society to understand one another in a way impossible to an outsider. More important is the fact that it embodies the inherited wisdom, feelings and beliefs of the society in the standardized forms of symbols, idioms and such richly allusive and picturesque words and phrases as traditional epithets and even names. Every society harbours a rich repertoire of such traditional forms of verbal expressions and its literary artists make frequent use of them as aide-memoires, or formulas in their compositions.

The language of the narrative war songs of the Ohafia

Igbo is full of such formulas[1] and formulaic expressions. These expressions are of two main types. The first includes a large number of names, praise-names[2] and other forms of

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1. Parry (1930: 80) defines the formula as "a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea." Founded on his studies of the Homeric epics, this definition became the basis of his analysis of the oral epics of the Yugoslavs which he recorded in the 1930's. It was later adopted by his pupil, Albert Lord and by other subsequent writers who, in their own studies, have followed Parry in insisting that formulas are employed more "as a result of metrical necessity" than for the meanings they convey (the phrase in quotes is from Chalmers Watts, 1969: 7). But contrary evidence have been provided in more recent studies (e.g. Chalmers Watts, ibid) showing that, their metrical value notwithstanding, formulas are also frequently used in many oral traditions (including those dealt with by Parry and Lord) to convey specific and particularized meanings and images and that they are not confined to the expression of generalized (or generic) heroic qualities shared in common by all heroes irrespective of the age and society in which they are found. But this is as it should be, for to insist too rigidly that formulas are exclusively employed in a generic manner and as a matter of "metrical necessity" is to suggest that there are no such "ready made units of speech" (Chalmers Watts) in non-metrical poetries such as the present Ohafia Igbo war songs. In the light of this, the definition of formulas given here stresses more the meanings and thematic effects which they serve to create than any other quality which they may possess. But whether or not any form of metre is involved in the structure of the formulas found in poetries in any of the tone languages of Africa is still an open question.

2. The term 'praise name' is commonly (but erroneously) used to refer to similar varieties of epithets in studies of African oral poetry. But as Innes (1976: 22) has pointed out, this kind of usage "is not altogether satisfactory, for a...praise does not always bestow a praise as the word is normally understood" (how glaringly contradictory!) The same is true of the rather quaint neologism, eulogue, coined by Kunene (1971) from "eulogy" in his study of Basotho heroic poetry. The contradictions involved in the use of these terms are avoided in the present study by the use of the more versatile alternative, epithet. Glossed in the Concise Oxford Dictionary, as (1) "Adjective expressing quality or attribute" and (2) "significant appelation", epithet embraces the whole range of significant appelations and fixed descriptive phrases found in oral heroic poetry, including those which bestow praises (praise names) and those which revile or mock (mock-heroic names).

fixed traditional epithets[3] which serve to present heroes, communities and other corporate objects and social groups in the heroic world, in terms of their historical roles and significance, their physical and psychological attributes and their associations with one another. This class of traditional expressions is discussed below (section 5.2.) as the epithet formulas[4] of the songs. The second major class of traditional formulas in the songs refers to actions and situations as well as focussing the attention of the listeners to the roles of the heroes and the significance of the locations in which they operate. This class of formulas consists mainly of recurrent verbal, adverbial and prepositive formatives of the kind normally distinguished in studies of narrative discourse-markers (see, for example, Wallis, 1970 and Gandour, 1976). In this Chapter, they are discussed as narrative formulas (section 5.3.), since - as we shall see - they occur mainly in the main narrative passages of the narrative war songs and include conventional narrative formulas of the kind normally employed in fables to introduce and conclude the narratives and to indicate points of progression in the development of the tale.

The effectiveness of these formulaic expressions cannot be fully appreciated without reference to their

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3. Many of these recurrent phrases are fixed syntagmatic units which function as single lexical items or words. Another sense in which they may be said to be fixed is that they possess stable and memorable tone-patterns (lexical tones) which remain unaffected when they are placed together with other units of language in larger syntactic structures. The result is the production of a species of melodic tone-patterns (as opposed to the grammatical tone-patterns of ordinary syntactic units). These are discussed below, in Chapter 6 (section 6.3.5).

4. See Note 2 above for the sense in which 'epithet formula' is used here.

figurative qualities. These features of the language of the texts will be dealt with in section 5.4.

5.2. EPITHET FORMULAS

From what we have said above about this class of formulas, a distinction may be made between three main categories - naming, descriptive and associative, epithets.

5.2.1. Naming Epithets

Naming epithets normally feature as nominals in the grammar of the songs. Essentially, these consist of those praise-names and titles which have come to replace the proper names of the individual participants or groups to whom they are applied.[5] Generally, these epithets refer to specific actions or circumstances associated in popular myth or legend with the emergence of the referends as heroes or as leading lineages or age-groups. An alternative name for these epithets would be commemorative epithets, since they generally allude to memorable events in the lives of those to whom they refer. The following are typical examples:

Example 1: Òmèrè-nde-èkpu-olè
Terror-of-them-that-trade-in-silver
- refers to Kamalu Olugu Ebiri, in EA,B1, 31-32

Example 2: Òmèrè-nde-èbu-igù
Terror-of-them-that-bear-palm-frond
- refers to Igirigiri Ezeiyi Awa, in NIU, B1, 40-41

Example 3: Òmèrè-nde-ère-ùbe-afụa
Terror-of-them-that-sell-blackpea-in-the-market
- refers to Ajadu Uma Ajadu, in NIO, B1, 73

Example 4: Òmèrè-nde-jị-ọkpụ-àga-ime-mịnị
Terror-of-them-that-jump-bottom-first-into-water
- refers to Awa Ezema Elechi, in NIO, B1, 24

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5. It is customary throughout Igboland to cease to address a man by his proper name and to use only his title or praise-name once he has earned one (see Ojike, 1946).

Example 5: Òmèrè-nde-Àba-Àhàbà
Terror-of-the-people-of-Aba-Ahaba
- refers to Ole Kamalu, in EA, B1, 35

Example 6: Òmèrè-Òkònkò-Ugwuèke
Terror-of-the-Okonko-secret-society-at-Ugwueke
'refers to Igirigiri Ezeiyi Awa, in NIO, B1,49

Example 7: Ògbu-ètuwùị-dī-ya
Killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband
- refers to Inyan Olugu, in IO, B1, 1

For lineage, we have, for example:

Example 8: Nde-mmon-bòòrò-ogō
People-whose-village-square-was-cleared-by-spirits
- refers to Ekidi Nde Ofoali, in NIO, B1, 69

Generally speaking, all naming epithets are particularized[6] in their allusions. They are particularized in two ways. First of all, each refers to one and only one character in the pantheon of ancestral heroes and may not be transfered to any other one without causing serious collocational discrepancies. Secondly, they tend in general to be culture-bound. This means that we cannot apply them to heroes in heroic poetry outside the particular age and society to which they refer.

Because of the particularized nature of the naming epithets, they often occur in fixed appositive patterns with the names of the participants to whom they refer. For example, the epithet 'killer that gave the honour to her husband' is always found bound with the name of the heroine, Inyan Olugu, to whom it refers, as follows:

Ìnyàn Ólùgù, Ògbu-ètuwùị-dī-ya
Inyan Olůgů, Killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband

6. Cf Parry (1928:118-172) who rejects the notion of the particularized use of epithets arguing that all epithets in oral heroic poetry are "generic", serving only the metrical purposes of the poet. See note 1 above.

Many other naming epithets are capable of standing alone as aliases in various grammatical relations. For example, the epithets - Odududu ndufu and "the Short-armed-one" (onye-aka-mkpuru) - which, respectively refer to the protagonist (Amoogu) and the antagonist (Oniko), occur frequently in this way in the various versions of Amoogu.

5.2.2. Descriptive Epithets

Descriptive epithets feature mainly as adjectival elements in the grammar of the poems. In general, they give us some indication of the physical appearance or personal mannerism of individual hero, or - in the case of lineages - salient features of their habitat or group behaviour.

The following are the most common examples of descriptive epithets for individual heroes, which present visual impressions of what each may have looked like:

Example 9: Obìlàzụ-kā-oso-àgba
Hunchback-that-runs-faster-than-his-peers
⊥ refers to Kamalu Olugu Ebiri (see also example 1, above) in NIO, B1, 91

Example 10: Onye-aka-mkpùrù-Liikē
Short-armed-ónē-of-Liike.

Example 11: Èlèghè-emèè-aki-bèkerè-dowe-yā-ukwù-mgbeghere
Likeness-of-the-coconut-tree-weighted-down-by-its-fruit-and-given-a-bent-waist.

In other examples, we perceive the heroes in terms of their character and behaviour rather than in terms of their personal appearance - as fleet-footed runners (example 12), as men who display the power of the elements (example 13), as fearless and indomitable warriors (examples 14-18), and as men inbued with ancestral energy (examples 19-21).

Example 12: Uruku-ǹgbàdà-uzò
Hare-of-the-wide-throughfares.
- refers to the second son of Ucha Aruodo (Nne Ugoenyi), in Egb, B1, 9

Example 13: Kamalū-òpà-òku-èje-ògù
Thunder-god-that-goes-to-battle-with-fire.
- refers to the First son of Ucha Aruodo (Nne Ugoenyi), in Egb, B1, 8

Example 14: Di-egbé-jī-egbè-ègburigha-àwọ
Wizard-of-the-guns-that-sport-with-guns.
- refers to Elibe Aja, in EA, B1, 4

Example 15: Onye-jī-òkpòm-èje-ògù
Person-that-goes-to-war-with-a-farming-knife.
- refers to Awa Afaka, in EA. B1, 10

Example 16: Òdududu-ǹdufu
He-that-leads-and-leads-leading-astray
(i.e. He that is so brave and dextrous that he leads his men into dangerous places, where they - less dextrous - get lost, while he returns in safety. See notes).
- refers to Amoogu, in Am, B1, 1

Example 17: Ebūghi-isi-àga-ujọ̄-nu
He-who-if-he-does-not-lead-the-way-the-journey-is-full-of-terror.
- refers to Amoogu, in Am, B1, 2-3

Example 18: Ebūghi-uzò-aha-ejèghì
He-who-if-he-does-not-lead-the-way-no-one-ventures-to-battle.
- refers to Nnaa Nfe, in EA, B1, 41

Example 19: Ikòro
War-drum (see notes)
- refers to Amoogu, in Am, B1, 2-3

Example 20: Arụ̀nshi
Ancestral-spirit (see notes)
- refers to several heroes in succession, e.g. in Am, B1, lines 4-9

Example 21: Nnà or Nne
Great father or great mother (see notes)
- refers to every hero and heroine everywhere in the texts

We have similar epithets for weapons. For instance,

Example 22: Ikwu-eri-àbò
Matriclan-of-them-that-eat-two-at-a-gulp

This is a common epithet for guns, e.g. in NM, C1, 12

For lineages, descriptive epithets usually serve to convey stylized pictures of aspects of the natural environment of local settlements. Examples:

Example 23: Ugwurugwu-naka-Ìgbèmìnì
Hill-on-the-bank-of-the-River
- refers to the lineage of okon, e.g. in EA, B1, 39

Example 24: Mde-ugwu-Ùmà-Mgbo
Hill-dwelling-offspring-of-Uma-son-of-Mgbo.
- refers to a lineage in Ebem, in Egb,B1, 6

Example 25: Ujùrù-kpokè-nde-à-Mgbo-enini
Offspring-of-Mgbo-the-gall-bladder-of-leopard-the-boundary-of-whose-home-is-marked-by-a-Ujuru-tree.
- refers to the lineage of Ebem, e.g. in EA,B1, 16

The choice of geographical features highlighted is not haphazard. As the notes show, these features are associated in myths and legends with the greatness and survival of the people or with the fashioning of their common lineage identity.

The larger and by far the more important set of descriptive epithets for lineages are those which evoke local colour by alluding to aspects of the culture and social life of the people - their arts and crafts (examples 26-28), their rites and customs (examples 29), their totems and taboos (examples 30-31), their attitudes to war (example 32) and their ethnic character as stereotyped in the evaluations of their neighbours (examples 33-34).

Example 26: Nde-àkpu-ìtè-àkpu-mgbere
People-that-make-pots-and-what-not
-refers to the people of Niike Ishiagu in AM. B1, 89

Example 27: Nde-māara-ogwu-ma-nwaàmi-wo
People-that-are-well-versed-in-medicine-even-their-women
- refers to the lineage of Okon in EA, B1, 10

Example 28: Nde-èrè-ùbe-afɔ̀a
People-that-sell-pear-in-the-market
- refers to an unnamed lineage in NIO, B1, 40-41

Example 29: Nde-ejì-efi-alù
People-whose-daughters'-bride-price-is-paid-in-cattle
- refers to Ibinagi in NIO, B1, 148

Example 30: Mbà-nde-erī-efi
Lineage-of-them-that-do-not-eat-the-meat-of-cows
- refers to Udumoke, in NIO, B1, 123

Example 31: Nde-àkpa-mgwùrù-lèghè-òkùkù
People-that-rear-lizards-like-fowls
- refers to Ekidi Nde Ofoali, in EA. B1, 29

Example 32: Mbà-ji-Kamalū-èje-ògù
Lineage-that-goes-to-war-with-the-god-of-Thunder
- refers to an unnamed lineage in Am. C1, 125

Example 33: Ìgbe-èkpè-ànàm-ète
Unsifting-Ekpe-box-that-swallows-everything-indiscriminately
- refers to Arochukwu in EA, B1, 70

Example 34: Nde-àgba-osō-lèghè-aturū
People-that-run-in-herds-like-sheep
- refers to Odo Ukiwe, in Am, B1, 65

It can be seen from the above examples that descriptive epithets include those which are particularized and others which are generalized in their allusions. There are also a few others which are both particularized and generalized.

The generalized epithets are free, non-culture bound entities which can be applied without discrimination to any hero or group in the Ohafia texts and, even across the barriers of time and culture, to heroes and groups in heroic poetry elsewhere.[7]

Epithets like "great one" (onye-okē) or "great" (okē) are completely generalized. Bards can almost use them without thought, even when referring to enemies of their own

7. These behave much in the same way as the "generic" epithets distinguished in Parry (1928). They are however not used for metrical convenience but as an essential element of the idiom of heroic poetry.

people. Thus in Am, Bl, the chief adversary of Ohafia is referred to as "great father Oniko" (line 126) and in Am, C1, as "the great one" (line 34).

5.2.3. Associative Epithets

These epithets, which feature as relative clauses or genitival nouns in the grammar of the poems, are the most numerous and by far the most important set of epithet formulas in the texts. Their principal role is to suggest and highlight the intricate network of bonds which link heroes with their society.

(a) Associative epithets linking heroes with their ancestors

The first category of associative epithets serves to denote the genealogical links between heroes and their immediate and remote ancestors, dead and alive. Since the ancestors named are usually heroic personalities, this category of associatives functions as a means of stressing the flow of the heroic afflatus in the society from generation to generation, from father to son, and so on, down the line to posterity. Usually, as we can see from the following examples, these associatives are generally signalled by the genitival head nwa (=son of), or the plural forms umu (=sons/children/offspring, of) and nde (= people/descendants,of). No textual references are given because of the high frequency of the examples cited:

Example 35: Nwa-Ọlọki-Ikpo
Son-of-Oloki-Ikpo

Example 36: Nwa-Ọgba-Ngwà
Son-of-Ogba-Ngwa

Example 37: Nwa-Ọhafia-Udumẹzẹma
Son-of-Ohafia-Udumezema.

Example 38: Nde-Awa-Ẹzema-Ẹlẹchi
People-of-Awa-son-of-Ezema-Elechi.

Example 39: Nde-Ugwu-Ùma-Mgbo
Hill-dwelling-offspring-of-Uma-son-of-Mgbo

In examples 38 and 39, the genitival element - nwa - is understood in the embedded associatives linking immediate to remote ancestors.

(b) Associative epithets linking heroes with their lineages

The second category of associatives serves to stress the lineage origins of the heroes. Examples:

Example 40: Onye-okē-Ùmumā
Great-one-of-Amuma.

Example 41: Onye-Nde-Àwa-Èzèma-Èlèchi
Person-of-Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi
(see example 38, above)

Example 42: Nwa-nwaàmì-Eyèn
Young-woman-of-Eyen.

Associatives of this kind are an important factor in the convention of paying compliment to lineages in the songs. They feature most prominently in such major themes as the catalogues, in which a succession of heroes are presented as representatives of the leading lineages of Ohafia. In the following catalogue from Amoogu B1, the accumulation of associatives of this kind helps to suggest the unity and single-mindedness of Ohafia lineages in the face of an external threat. In it we see a strongly individualistic but stolidly-determined and united body-politic massing their forces together to fight a common cause:

1. My great father Iro Agbo, who is of Okpo Ntighiri,
2. He said he would sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns, so the Short-armed-one-of-Niike might be killed.
3. My great father Awa Afaka, who is of Udegbe Ezi Anunu,
4. He said he would sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns, so the Short-armed-one-of-Niike might be killed.

5. My great father Mbu Olugu, who is of Egbenyi Uka,
6. Said he would sit in a nest of soldier-ants and
charge guns so the Short-armed-one-of-Niike might
be killed.

The theme is developed in couplets (1-2, 3-4, 5-6). Each of the couplets presents one hero by means of an associative epithet, as a representative of his lineage and as a volunteer pledging himself to fight the common cause.

Another role of the associative epithets which link heroes to their lineages if that of constantly keeping the double-descent ethos of the narratives in view. Thus, at the beginning of Nne Mgbaafo B2 and Inyan Olugu B2 the heroines are presented: in the former, both as a "person of (the patrilineage of)Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi" and a "person of (the matrilineage of) Eleghe Ofoka"); and in the latter, as a "person of (the patrilineage of) Amaeke Abam" and a "young woman of (the matrilineage of) Eyen". Double-descent associations of this kind are frequent, and unless the listener knows something of the social system to which they refer, he will probably find it difficult to understand their real significance.

(c) Associative epithets linking lineages with other heroes

Just as heroes are identified in terms of their lineages of origin, lineages are also often identified in terms of the crop of heroes produced by them. In the following for example, the Asaga village-group (hometown of the hunter-hero, Elibe Aja) is eulogized as follows in preparation for the glorious emergence of the hero:

Example 43: Oõ ibe a mù Mbilà Obu!
That is the birthplace of Mbila Obu!
Oõ ibe a mù Nnàa Nte!
That is the birthplace of Father Nte!
Oõ ibe a mù Kamalu-a-Ngwo....
That is the birthplace of Kamalu son of Ngwo....

(d) Associative epithets linking heroes with their close relatives

Another category of associative epithets serves to link heroes with their close relatives - mothers (44-46); wives (47); sisters (48); and daughters (46):

Example 44: Nwa Nne Orieji Ukpo
Son of mother Orieji Ukpo
(AM, B1: 97)

Example 45: Nwa Nne Agboke Ezeji
Son of Mother Agboke Ezeji
(EA, B1: 27)

Example 46: Nwa Àda Amoogu
Son of the daughter of Amoogu
(NIO,B1: 57)

Example 47: Di Ogba Ngwà
Husband of Ogba Ngwa
(NIO, B1:)

Example 48: Nwanne Agbookē Ezeejī
Brother of Agbooke Ezeeji
(EA, B1: 28)

(e) Associative epithets linking heroes with their age-sets

Outside the above-listed types of relationships, the most important kind of social relationship stressed by the associative epithets is the relationship between heroes and the age-sets to which they belong. One notable instance is the description of the heroine of Amoogu as "Onye-oke Etum Olumba", i.e. Great one of the Etum Olumba (age-set). Considering the relative rarity of associative epithets of this kind, it may be said that this particular instance is occasioned by the crucial role played by this maleficient age-

set as the hero's assassins and the victims of the retributive wrath of his spirit at the end.

5.3. NARRATIVE FORMULAS

This class of formulas includes four main categories, namely:

(a) situation-marking formulas;

(b) action-marking formulas;

(c) participant-identifying formulas; and,

(d) location-identifying formulas.

5.3.1. Situation-marking Formulas

These are standardized expressions with a verbal matrix which refer to the passage of time. They are of three types:

(a) initiating formulas;

(b) concluding formulas; and,

(c) continuative formulas.

(a) Initiating formulas

The role of this category of situation-marking formulas is to introduce the main events of the story at the beginning of a text. They generally have the standard form:

O dì + participant + situation

There was + participant + situation

This form may be overtly manifest in a surface structure or otherwise understood. We find it in the following surfaces which occur at the beginning of Amoogu B3 and Elibe Aja B1, respectively:

Example 49:

O dì	mbā ōlu	a dīghi Ohafīa alù
There was	one country	which Ohafia could not fight
There was	participant	situation

(AM, B3: 1)

Example 50:

Ọ dị̀	anụ olū	na-àzịa Ọfụ̀a,
There was	one animal	which was coming from the bush
There was	participant	situation

Abia erina aru mmadu
coming and eating off men in the land of the Aro.
situation cont'd (EA, B1: 1)

The same formulaic pattern of words is understood in the following opening sentence from Nne Mgbaafo, A1:

Example 51:

Onye olū àza Nne Mgbaafọ
One person bore the name of Nne Mgbaafo

This transforms easily into:

Example 52:

Ọ dị̀	onye olu	na-aza Nne Mgbaàfọ̀
There was	one woman	who bore the name of Nne Mgbaafo
There was	participant	situation

Similarly:

Example 53:

Nwatā nwaàmị̀
Onye Nde-Awa-Ezema Elechi (Nne Mgbaafo B2, lines 1-2)

tranforms into:

Example 54:

Ọ dị̀	Nwatā nwaàmị̀ olu	onye-Nde-Àwa-Èzèma-Èlèchi
There was	one young woman	person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi
There was	participant	

In this case, the situation is given in the next two lines as the decision of the heroine's husband to go to war, despite the fears of his wife.

A full grammatical expression of the standard initiating narrative formulas in the songs - whether they are manifest in a surface structure or understood - would be as follows:

> Verb-prhase (usually ọ dị̀) + noun-phrase (identifying participant) + relative clause (defining the situation in which the participant will be called upon to prove his heroism.

(b) Concluding formulas

These narrative formulas, which serve to interpret the significance of events at the end of most narratives, are neither fixed nor standardized in structure as is the case with the initiating formulas. Rather they consist of the following limited stock of sentences one or another of which we find at the end of almost all the texts:

Example 55: Ọọ̄ ǹnè o jì mea
That is how it happened.

Example 56: Ọọ̄ ya mèrè + information/explanation (myth)
That is the reason why + information/explanation (myth)

Example 57: Ọọ̄ ife meenṹ + explanation
That is what happened, and so + explanation

Example 58: E jì m Elìbe Àjà (or other participant) mara + lesson to be drawn from event
I know this from the case of Elibe Aja etc.

Quite often, these formulas are accompanied by a lyrical celebration of the events explained.

(c) Continuative formulas

Like the initiating formulas, and unlike the concluding formulas, these are generally fixed and standardized in form, as follows:

Ya jē̄ èru + time-referent noun + situation

or simply

Ya jē̄ + situation

The fixed phrase ya jē̄ èru (literally 'it went to reach') is somewhat like 'it came to pass' in biblical idiom. In the translations offered, I have been guided by the specific contexts in which the phrase occurs than by this literal meaning, hence the occurrence of many different glosses in

the translations. The following are instances of its use in the texts to mark the passage of time:

Example 59:

Ya je èru	àbàlì olū
It dragged on thus until	one night/= day
Fixed verbal element	time-referent noun

The situation (gathering of Ohafia war chiefs) is given in the next line.

Example 60:

Ya jē èru	Mgbè Egbele
When it came to the	time of Egbele
Fixed verbal element	time-reference noun

The situation is given in the next line as the social pressure on the now mature youth to go to war despite the death of his three elder brothers and the fears of his mother.

Example 61:

Ya jē èru	mgbè	wọ mèè nnọ
At last	when	they had done as expected
Fixed verbal element	time-reference noun	situation

In the following, the time-reference is omitted because it is understood in the fixed verbal element.

Example 62:

Ya jē	àluọ
When time came	for her to return
Fixed verbal element	situation

5.3.2. Action-marking formulas

These are sets of verbal phrases which mark the following four main types of action - utterances (verbal action), deeds, movements and ritual acts,

(a) Utterances

The utterances in the songs divide into stylized mono-

logues and dialogues. The most colourful varieties of the former are the lyrical outbursts of participants at points of acute emotional distress. Where such outbursts are joyful, they are introduced by the phrases: ya or wo tīpua (he or they burst out singing). The same phrases are used to introduce songs of lament, since they are not specific in the colour of the emotion they refer to. More specific in their reference to emotions of sadness is the phrase ya or wo kwāpua (burst into a cry or dirge) or the more colourful phrase ya or wo rēkwapua (burst into a flaming rage of tears). See 5.4.1. below for further comments on these as verbal metaphors.

Apostrophic monologues addressed directly by some characters to other characters, or in the mode of pathetic fallacy to the dead or to inanimate objects, are as a rule introduced by the phrases ya tīkù (he cried out to) or wo lōkù (they called out to). When singers use such modes of address, as in Amoogu B1 (lines 96-103), the effect is dramatic - the singer insinuating himself into the drama of the moment and presenting the plight of the participants in all its emotional intensity.

Finally, we have numerous stylized monologues comprising the distressed questioning of the community of heroes as a whole about problems facing them. These are constantly introduced by the phrase, wo jūpua (they burst out questioning).

Stylized dialogues occur in couplets of question-and-answer, or statement-against-statement lines, simply marked

by the phrases ya sī.../ya...sī (he said.../he said); ya sī.../ya zā...(he said.../he replied) and ya jū.../ya zā (he asked .../he replied).

(b) Deeds

Because of the overriding interest of the songs in deeds of slaughter in war and hunting as well as in other kinds of physical and transitive actions, there is a high preponderance of the following transitive verbs of action in the texts: gbuo (kill), gbupù-isī (chop off head), kee, (capture), buru (carry away), sère (drag away), and many others. These recurrent verbs do not occur in any fixed or standardized form; but by their high frequency of occurence, they keep the types of physical actions they denote constantly in our view. It is in this sense that they can be described as formulas, i.e. as items in a characteristic stock of verbs referring to military action.

(c) Movements

The frequent exits and entrances of characters in the songs are marked by another class of recurrent verbs. The most interesting of these is a class of verbs which have no fixed lexical status of their own but which take their meanings in the particular semantic environment in which they are employed. The verb, turu, is one of these.[8] Depending on what the situation is, it may refer to exit or arrival. As shown below, it also refers to other kinds of action, e.g.dressing up for battle. Similar to the verbs of unspecific lexical meaning are a number of qualifying adverbial

8. It is significant that this particular verb is not common in everyday usage. It is thus, in this respect, one rare example of 'poetic diction' in the texts.

elements which have no specific lexical meaning. A notable example is the cluster, mbèlège mbèlège.[9] The meaning of this adverbial depends on the semantic environment in which it occurs. The following are among the variant glosses given in the texts:

They (or he/she) went	tactfully, tactfully hopefully, hopefully stealthily, stealthily etc.

These occur frequently as a formula marking the beginning of a new episode or a shift in scene within the same episode. Another formula of the same type is wo gã-àga ogõ mụo (they went past their ogu) or the singular ya gã-àgɑ ogõ mụo.

(d) Ritual Acts[10]

For the ritual acts of dressing up for battle (usually carrying a gun and matchet), we frequently find the following form of words:

Ya dàa + weapon + buru
He found + weapon + and carried.

Quite often the same acts are described by means of the verb of non-specific denotation, turu, or by other more specific verbs - sụị (load or charge a gun), or mụrụ (sharpen a matchet).

5.3.3. Participant-identifying Formulas

Participant-identifying formulas are a class of narrative formulas by means of which our attention is focussed on epithets or other expressions which identify a hero by name or define his role in the songs. The two phrases commonly used in this way are ọ zã̄ (he bears the name of) or the plural wo àzà, and the deitic construction ọ wū̄ (he is) or

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9. Ndùrùga-ndùrùga in the "E" texts.

10. Ritual in the sense of being

the plural ha wu. The singular of the latter phrase is often contracted to oo by the elision of the initial consonant of wu (is) and the progressive assimilation of its vowel (u) by the pronominal vowel (o). We find instances of the use of these "myth-creative"[11] narrative formulas a lot at the beginning of several texts. In Amoogu B3 (1-2), we have:

Example 63:

Ọ dì mbā ōlu a dīghi Ọhafīa alụ̀:
There was a certain country which Ohafia could not fight:
Wọ àza Liikē Ishiagū
They bear the name of Niike Ishiagu.

And in Nne Mgbaafo B2, we have:

Example 64:

Nwaīā nwaàmì
Young woman
Onye-Nde-Awā-Ẹzèma-Ẹlèchi
Native of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi
* Ọ zā Mgbaafọ̄ Kalū
She bears the name of Mgbaafo Kalu.
* Ọ wụ̄ onye Ẹlègbe Ọfọkā
She is a native of Elegbe Ofoka.
* Di yā àza Ndùkwe Ẹme
Her husband bears thename of Ndukwe Eme

5.3.4. Location-identifying Formulas

Like participant-identifying formulas, these contain the fixed deictic element o wū plus the location referent nominal, ibe (the place or where), thus in Elibe Aja B1, the hero's hometown is identified as follows, using the full formula o wu ibe (That is the place, or that is where):

Ọọ̄ ibe a mù Mbila Obu
That is where mbila obu was born
Ọọ̄ ibe a mù Kamalū-a-Ngwò
That is where Kamalu son of Ngwo was born
Ọọ̄ ibe a mù Nnaa Ntè -
That is where great father Nte was born -
Onye-okē-mere-nde èbu-anwùrù-èbu-àkawa
Great one that made the lineage of them that trade in tobacco turn to trade in salt-petre.

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11. The term is after Darbyshire (1971:78) who describes syntactic patterns as having "played an important part in...civilization, especially in the more self-conscious areas of myth-creation.

5.4. FIGURATIVE ELEMENTS

As indicated in the introductory section, the effectiveness of the two classes of formulas examined depends to a large extent on their figurative qualities: their allusiveness, picturesque imagery and symbolic use of language.

5.4.1. Allusions

There are pithy allusions to all aspects of the environment against which the narratives are set. There are allusions to historical events involving individual heroes (examples 1-7); there are also allusions to historical events involving whole lineages or communities (example 7). Most of these historical allusions are deeply rooted in myth and legend, while others refer to political, commercial and other activities known to recorded history, as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.) above. See also the examples given in section 5.2.1 above.

Apart from these historical allusions, there are also allusions to the geographical, social and cultural realia, all presented with images which make them perceptible visually and vividly (5.4.2.). The overall effect of these allusions is that of intense local colour realism, an aspect of the narratives highly appreciated by the audiences (9.3.2).

5.4.2. Imagery

It would seem natural, in a poetry of action, that there should be a high preponderance of visual, auditory and tactile images. These sensual impressions are conveyed to us largely by means of apt similes and kennings, by alliteration, onomatopeia and ideophone, and by hyperbole

and personification. The overriding tone is one of ritual grandeur and high moral seriousness; be that as it may, the intensity of this tone of high moral seriousness is occasionally relieved by a touch of humour, irony or sarcasm, especially where the need arises to belittle Ohafia's enemies or to laugh at dishonourable cowards.

Many formulas in the songs achieve their pictographic effects by the use of comparisons such as those contained in examples 10, 11 and 34 above:

(a) the Short-armed-one-of-Niike;

(b) the-likeness-of-the-coconut-tree-weighed-down-by-its-fruit-and-given-a-bent-waist.

(c) people that run in herds like sheep.

Examples 10 and 11 are cases of implied similes, or kennings, while example 34 is a straightforward comparison, a simple simile. The comparison in 10 will probably be better appreciated if we recognized that the word mkpùrù in the epithet onye-aka-mkpùrù-Liike really means stump, so that the epithet transforms easily into 'person of Niike whose arms are like stumps'. Example 11, on the other hand transforms easily into 'woman who resembles a coconut tree weighed down by its fruits and given a bent trunk'.

The vividness of these similes stems from the familiarity of the scenes and situations in villages and the natural environment to which they refer, and the warm bucolic humour which underlies their conception. In another simile - 'people that rear lizards like goats' (Nde-àkpa-ǹgwùrù-lèghè-ewu) - in Elibe Aja B1, what is intended as a serious refer-

ence to a totemistic phenomenon characteristic of the village of Elu, is almost undermined by the underlying humour. But the effect remains vividly visual and almost palpable.

Some interesting sound effects are created by the employment of alliteration and ideophones in the construction of some epithets. In the opening lines of Amoogu B1, for example, the du-du-du sound in the epithet ò̀dùdùdu ǹdùfù̀, perfectly imitates the sound of a drum and - incidentally perhaps - foreshadows the third eulogy of the hero as 'war drum' (ikero), in the second and third lines:

ò̀dùdùdu ǹdùfù̀
Odududu ndufu
Ebūghi-isi-agā-ujō̩nu, ikò̀rò̀!
Ikoro, without whom there is no forward march!
Ebūghi-isi-à̀ga-ujō̩nu, ikò̀rò̀!
Ikoro, without whom there is no forward march!

Another figure commonly found in the construction of the epithets is personification. One of the most striking examples is the description of guns as matriclan of them that eat two at a gulp (example 22), a figure clearly related to the matrilineal emphasis in the Ohafia social system.

Throughout, the serious ritual, cultural and historical references of the epithets give the narratives a tone of high moral seriousness. We see this in the assumption by the singers of the role of teachers, interpreters and moralists, as evidenced by the frequency of numerous explicative narrative formulas of the types seen in section 5.3. above.

The apostrophizing of dead-ancestors as if they were present at the beginning of many songs invests the stories

with an atmosphere of high ritual grandeur proper to a tradition of heroic poetry intimately involved with the religion of ancestor-veneration. Some of the apostrophic addresses to ancestors, for example the references to many great fathers and mothers by different singers as Nne m (my mother) or Nna m (my father) suggest, not merely a poetic empathy on the part of the singers with the heroes but also their deep commitment as patriots and natives to the values represented by them.

When the high moral seriousness of the songs is apparently varied, in parts, by ironies and sarcasm such as those contained in the reference to Niike Ishiagu in Amoogu B2, as 'makers of pots and what not', they serve to satirize the unheroical or the alien[12] in order to further amplify the heroical and the familiar.

5.4.3. Symbolism

In literary usage, the term symbol "refers most specifically to a manner of representation in which what is shown (normally referring to something material) means, by virtue of association, something more or something else (normally referring to something immaterial). Thus a literary symbol unites an image (the analogy) and an idea or conception of the subject) which that image suggests or evokes - as when, for example, the image of climbing a staircase (the difficulty involved in the effort to raise oneself) is used to suggest the idea of "raising oneself spiritually or becoming purified" (T.S.Eliot's Ash Wednesday) (EPP: 833).

In the narrative war songs of the Ohafia Igbo, a

12. i.e. behaviour alien to the mores of the society or enemy societies.

distinction may be made between two main types of symbols - traditional symbols (images with fixed and inherited associations) and contextual symbols (images which gain their association with an abstract idea or conception by reason of the emphasis laid on them in a particular context. In both types of symbols, the images presented are those of geographical, historical, social and cultural realia of the heroic age, and the ideas evoked are those heroic virtues normally associated with heroic characters - manly prowess, dexterity, leadership, wealth, beauty, power and authority.

(a) Contextual symbolism

There is a case of contextual symbolism in the use of the image of heroes sitting in a nest of soldier-ants, in Amoogu to evoke the idea of manly prowess, courage, and resilience. These particular implications of the image are bound up with the important place played by the ritual action it describes in the story of Amoogu. It is otherwise not associated with any particular idea. The same is true of the image of the silk-cotton tree at the close of the same story. In this case, the image evokes the idea of retributive justice, an embodiment of the spirit of the assassinated hero come to revenge for his assassination.

Another instance of contextual symbolism will be found in Nne Acho Ugo, where, as we have noted in the foregoing chapter (section 4.5.) the birds who shirk the duty of giving their mother a decent burial, are presented as symbols of vanity, sloth, irresponsibility, and everything else pertaining to dishonour in the heroic society.

Apart from these, and a few other cases, all other symbols in the texts are traditional, with fixed associations with particular ideas or conceptions.

(b) Traditional symbolism

Many traditional symbols in the texts evoke the idea of manly prowess, wrath, courage, resilience or the like. Here are some typical examples:

Image	natural quality	idea evoked
1. Kamalu̱ Thunder	presage to lightning and destructive fire	The destructive wrath of ferocious warriors
2. Oku Fire	burning, reducing things to ash	(as above)
3. Ebùlù Ram	strong animal, sexy and manly	manly prowess
4. Agu̱ leopard	strong animal, ferocious and stronger than other beasts, including the ram	extraordinary manly prowess and ferocity

We find these associations in references to certain heroes as Kamalu̱, (Thunder and lightning); Òpà-oku-èje-ògù (He that carries fire into battle); Anu-èri-èbùlù (Beast that can devour the ram); and Agu (Leopard). Occasionally - in the case of the fourth, enìnì agu̱ (gall-bladder of leopard) may be used metanomically to stand for leopard, and hence for extraordinary manly prowess. We find this, for example, in the numerous references to Ebem as Nde-à-Mgbo-enini (offspring of Mgbo, gall-bladder of the leopard).

Apart from cosmic phenomena and wild life, natural objects are also used in the songs as symbols of the physical prowess and resilience of the heroes. For instance, a particularly resilient hero may be referred to as Nkumà (stone, or

rock) or oke osisi, often shortened to oke osī (great tree, by implication the iroko, the Igbo equivalent of the oak in European symbology).

Another quality of heroes highlighted by means of symbols is speed, dexterity and agility. A typical example is the reference to one of the four sons of Nne Uguenyi, in Egbele B1 as Uruku-m̀gbàdà-uzọ̀, "Uruku, Hare of the wide throughfares". Hare, in Igbo symbology, is always a symbol of speed and dexterity. So too is the antelope, thus certain heroes are described as ele-miri-aka-m̀pì (water-antelope with gnarled horns).

A third group fo symbols refer to the quality of inspiring leadership, wisdom and fortitude which mark out heroes from other men. They are, to begin with ikọ̀rọ̀ (war drum), whose rousing rhythms propel men to war, sometimes even against their fears of the dangers that lie ahead. This implication of the symbol will be found clearly expressed at the opening of Amoogu B1, where it is used as a nominal epithet, in apposition with the image of the hero as the fearless one that goes where others fear to go, and without whose leadership no-one can march to battle (Am, B1: 1-3).

Another quality of heroes highlighted by means of traditional symbols is their divinity. Thus, heroes are frequently referred to as arụ̀nsi (ancestral spirits), e.g. in Am, B1: 4-9. References of this kind - to the divinity of the heroes - evoke ideas of their power and authority, ideas which are further developed by referring to symbols of wealth and authority in the garments of the heroes e.g. the

ọkàrà cloth, eagle-plumes and ọkpu-agū (the war cap, with its decorations of the red tail-feathers of the parrot), see note 20 , page 12 above.

If the male warriors are identified with symbols of wealth, power and authority the women associated with them are associated with symbols of beauty and wealth, e.g. ọlà (jewel) in the reference to the mother of one of the warriors consulted by the Aro, in Elibe Aja B1, as ọlà Isiàkù (jewel, princess of wealth).

While the traditional symbols described above refer to the heroic attributes of individual characters in the texts, others refer to concepts and situations closely bound up with the heroic pattern of life. Of particular interest, in this connection, are the numerical and colour symbols found in the texts. Because of the frequency of their occurrence, we may discuss them in some detail here.

Numerical symbols. The numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 20 and 400 are frequently mentioned in the texts, in relation to important events and actions. Sometimes, as in Ogbaka Okorie, the meanings of these numerical symbols are overtly stated.

Ife dɪ̀ àbọ̀ di olū ǹke dɪ̀ olū kwùkọ̀tàrà onū (OO,B1:)

It is difficult to convey the full implications of this sentence in a straightforward translation. Literally, we have:

Ife dɪ̀ àbọ̀, di olū, ǹke dɪ̀
A thing that is two, that is one, the one that is

olū kwùkọ̀tàrà onū
one stands by itself as one.

We get its full implications by expanding it as follows:

> When a thing that is composed of two elements stands side by side with one that is composed of only one element, the one that is composed of one element displays its unity (or wholeness).

This association of the number, 1, with unity or wholeness, is common in the symbolic idiom of most peoples of the world. But though the statement tends to imply that the number 2 is a symbol of lack of unity or wholeness, two in actual fact is a traditional Igbo symbol of balance, drawing its meaning from the observable duality of forms in nature: two eyes two nostrils, two hands, two legs, two breasts and so on.[12] There is also the dualism of life and death, night and day, laughter and tears, and so on. Thus, it is natural to perceive reality in terms of balanced and counter-balanced opposites and companions (see section 6.4.2 below). The significance of the number 2, in the songs, is evident in the dominance of motifs such as those involving the dispatch of two persons to deal with crucial situations. Thus in Amoogu C1 two messengers are sent by the priest-diviner Ogodo, to look for a sacrificial dog used in the divination to determine what the people should do to overcome the Niike dwarf; and in all texts of the song, two leading warriors are dispatched to open the attack on the dwarf, following the success of the hero in charging the gun - at the second attempt in the B texts and at the fourth in the C text. Four, too, like two and other multiples of two are symbols of balance. As we shall see in Chapter 6 (6.4.2) the significance of two and multiples of two appears to underlie the patterns of antithetical parallelism in the songs involving the balancing and counter-balancing of two related or opposed objects and

actions.

Odd numbers, in general, appear to symbolize the disruption of natural balance. It is therefore not surprising that critical events such as the outbreak of wars take place on the third day after a major decision. In Nne Mgbaafo, it is after waiting for three weeks that the heroine decides to embark on the perilous quest for her husband in enemy territory. Equally significant in this respect is that the wicked sons of Nne Acho Ugo, who refused to honour their mother on her departure for the land of spirits, number five; and in Amoogu C1, the delegation chosen to pay the fatal good-will visit to the cunning Niike dwarf, number seven, a particularly unlucky number. Notice too that when the dwarf attacks them, he cuts away an odd number - three men - leaving an even number - four men - to return with the news to Ohafia.

Finally, the numbers five, ten, twenty and their highest square multiple - four hundred (nnù) - are natural symbols, adding up the fingers of the hands and feet. These are of no deeper significance and are merely used to indicate plenitude, as in scenes of slaughter where bodies are counted in nnù (four hundreds) e.g. the close of various texts of Amoogu. Also at the opening of Elibe Aja B1, the gifts offered by the Aro to the Ohafia for help in fighting the leopardess are counted in fives and four hundreds.

Colour symbols. Briefly, in the cases of references to colour, black (which is associated with night) symbolizes mystery and danger, and this may explain why the perfidious Short-armed-one of Niike decides to give his hosts a "black

ram" at the end of their fatal visit to his village (see Am, Cl: 42). Another common colour symbol in the texts is red (ufie): associated with blood, this evokes the ideas of achievement and success in battle. It will be recalled that the Ohafia war cap is usually red and decorated with the red tail-feathers of the parrot.

CHAPTER 6

POETIC STRUCTURE

6.1. INTRODUCTION

The formulaic elements of the language of the songs examined in the last Chapter are not only the vehicles of poetic imagery, symbolism and allusion; as we shall see in the present Chapter, they are also the basic elements of poetic structure.[1] In contradistinction to the structure of common speech,[2] poetic structure is characterized by a special rhetorical ordering of language both for controlled and melodic patterns of rhythm and for heightened impact on the emotions and the mind of the hearer.[3] At first sight, this special rhetorical ordering of language

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1. EPP (812 defines 'structure' as the sum of the relationships of the parts of a literary whole to one another'. Two facets of the structure of the narratives are discussed below - the poetic and the narrative (see note 3).

2. Common Igbo speech is by no means unpoetic. In fact the constant use of epithets and similar picturesque descriptive phrases as well as of idioms and proverbs, especially in serious conversation among cultured old men, is often strikingly poetic. However we are dealing here with controlled patterns of rhythmic and rhetorical features which in ordinary speech would appear quaint, idiosyncratic and deviant (see note 3 below).

3. Poetry is a special register of speech which draws attention to itself and impresses its message forcefully upon the emotions and the minds of the hearer by reason of its rhetorical force and controlled rhythm. "From ancient times to the present, rhetoric in the broad sense has meant the art of persuasion, in the narrow sense the studied ornament of speech or eloquence". (EPP : 702). Rhetoric in both senses is often combined, in poetry, with the schematization of sounds, words and the periodic units of language resulting in controlled patterns of rhythm, or verse.

appears to be absent from the texts of the present Ohafia war songs, especially in the main narrative and invocative passages which unlike the lyrical and invocative passages (see 2.4 above) are not readily discernable as patterned forms of words.[4] But this apparent ordinariness is the consequence of approaching the songs on paper, as transcribed texts, rather than as they really are - verbal musical utterances (abụ) composed and performed orally under the constraint of instrumental musical accompaniment and intended for the ear rather than the eye.[5] Approached from this perspective, the impression that certain passages are no different from common speech readily disappears. Not only do we hear and even feel a controlled pattern of rhythm closely responding to the tempo and beat of the musical accompaniment (2.4.5 above) and varying in mode from song, recitation and chant to melodic speech, we also hear and feel a symmetrical and antithetical patterning of words, through which the pictures of reality which constitute the themes and motifs of the songs (see Chapter 4, note 1)

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4. This refers to the antiphonal (solo-and-chorus) form of most of the lyrical passages and the serial recurrence of names and epithets in the invocative passages coupled with the fact that the former is often sung and the latter chanted (see introductory part of Section 2.4 above).

5. The impression of ordinariness is even more apparent in translations from the original Igbo into English. It is therefore important to look for the features described here in the Igbo texts given rather than in the translations, none of which can capture the verbal nuances and rhythmic patterns actually heard in the oral performance.

come through with emphasis, clarity, lyricism and dramatic intensity.[6]

As we shall see presently (sections 6.3 and 6.4 below), the basic structural and aesthetic principles governing these poetic effects and the patterns of words on which they are based are stylistic repetition and parallelism. The repeated elements include various words and formulaic entities; but more importantly they involve larger units of utterance clearly perceptible on listening to actual performances or to the tape-recordings as sequences of words and formulas each of which is uttered in a breath and clearly demarcated from contiguous units of the same kind by a distinct pause.

So clearly distinct are these breath-groups that in the course of the field research various native-speakers of the Ohafia dialect engaged to help in the transcription[7] were able, without prompting, to treat them as independent units of structure and even more significantly to arrange them in

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6. See Chapter 9. As will be seen here, in the discussion of the traditional criteria on which the Ohafia people themselves base their appreciation of the songs, these are among the aesthetic effects mentioned by many informants. See especially Section 9.5 and 9.6., on the standards of clarity and creative variation.

7. Apart from one of my students at the University of Ibadan (Mr.O.U.Ojo), the other informants are local residents with little more than primary school education, hence with no knowledge of the breath-group criterion of transcribing units of African oral poetry as lines of verse (see Babalola, 1964: Appendix).

numbered rows as poetic units. When asked to explain the basis of this method of transcription, these native informants usually replied that they transcribed the breath-groups as poetic units because they saw the compositions involved as "a type of iri" (musical expression). But there appear to be other reasons, which they, as native speakers, could feel but not so readily explain. First of all, the breath-groups are independent syntagmatic entities ranging from single words (e.g. 'M̀-m̀-m̀-gbaà fọ̀! , in line 1 of Nne Mgbaafo B1) to complex multiclausal sentences (e.g. 'Egbuo wọ̄ mmadù, !wọ anìghì àgba mkpū, èbuo ǹgwùrù wò gbara mkpū gaa', in line 29 of Elibe Aja B1). Secondly each breath-group is clearly perceptible as an independent intonation unit, generally beginning with a stressed high-tone syllable (a steep rise or prominence) and ending through successive down-stepping of tones (a normal characteristic of syntagmatic entities in spoken Igbo) to a distinctively low pitch-level made all the more prominent by the intervening pause and the stressed high-tone syllablē at the beginning of the succeeding breath group (6.2.2.2b).[8] Thirdly, each breath-group is a unit of meaning, or better still, a 'unit of attention'[9] comprising either a formula or a collocation

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8. On the phenonomenon of down-stepping of tones in Igbo speech, see Carrell (1970 : 1). 'Tone' here = pitch.

9. This refers to Brooks and Warren's definition of the poetic line as a "unit of attention" though "not necessarily a unit of sense" (EPP : 450). But as pointed out in the following discussion, the lines of the present Ohafia texts are generally "units of sense" composed of formulas or utterances with a formulaic matrix presenting various themes or aspects of themes.

of formulas, or an utterance signalled by a narrative formula by means of which a theme or an aspect of a theme is presented (6.2.3). Finally, the breath-groups show evidence of the use of such conventional prosodic devices as alliteration, assonance and tonal contrast (for melodic effects) and of length, contraction, assimilation and elision (for harmonic effects). See 6.2.4. The melodic and harmonic effects created by the use of these prosodic devices have implications for poetic rhythm. However, it is mainly through the repetition and parallelism of lines that two characteristic patterns of rhythm found in the songs - the incantatory and the antiphonal - are produced (6.2.5). Repetition and parallelism are also the means through which poetic rhetoric in the form of emphasis, lyricism and dramatic intensity is achieved in the process of theme-creation. (Section 6.3 and 6.4).

The themes and motifs of the narratives[10] - the stylized pictures and descriptions of characters, situations, actions and locations - are contained in groups of closely-related lines formed as a result of repetition and parallelism and bound together by rhyme, cross parallelism and other forms of linking. Described below (section 6.5) as verses, after Fortune's description of similar structures in Shona Praise Poetry (1978:Intro.)[11], these line-groups range from couplets of various kinds to tercets, quatrains, quintains and more

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10. On the sense in which the terms theme and motif are employed here, see Chapter 4 (note 1).

11. Fortune (1978:Intro.) defines the verse in Shona praise poetry as "a group of lines which show evidence of internal structure".

complex formations (6.5.1). These constitute the secondary units of the poetic structure of the songs and combine with one another in various patterns to form tertiary units which function in the narratives in the manner of paragraphs in prose discourse and which are thus distinguished by analogy as verse paragraphs (section 6.5.2).[12] Contained in these units of poetic structure are the parallel, tertiary units of narrative structure - the main dramatic incidents or episodes of which the songs are ultimately built.

Throughout this Chapter, then, a distinction will be maintained between two distinct but interlocking facets of structure, namely: the poetic and the narrative. The poetic structure is the sum of the relationships that subsists between various elements of language (sound, syllables, morphemes, words and syntactic elements) and their formation into lines, verses and paragraphs for various rhythmic, rhetorical and aesthetic effects. The elements involved in these relationships are perceptible to the ear in the oral production and constitute the vehicles for the

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12. The term verse paragraph is fairly well-established both in general poetics and in the study of African oral poetry, "Like prose," according to EPP (890), "poetry tends to move forward in units which may be called by analogy, verse paragraphs. This tendency is particularly strong in narrative and descriptive poetry, where the paragraphs are often indicated by indentation or spacing between lines". Similarly Kunene, in his study of Basotho heroic poetry, dithoko, (1971 : 52) writes: "Just as in prose the limits of a paragraph are often defined by the central idea it contains, so in dithoko we shall be guided by the principle of the central idea.... And just as paragraphs in prose often differ remarkably in length, so will the paragraphs in dithoko be found to do."

presentation of the more abstract narrative elements (perceptible only in the imagination) which go into the making of the tale.[13] Thus formulaic images and symbols are contained in lines and half-lines, themes and motifs in verses, and episodes in paragraphs.

Also maintained throughout this Chapter is a distinction between 'poetic structure' and 'verse'. "Verse", according to Hockett (1958: 558)

> can be defined as discourse in which the speaker binds himself in advance to follow certain more or less closely defined patterns of rhythm, regardless of the topic of the discourse. The rhythm is variously achieved in different languages: sometimes it is a spacing of stresses, lengths, or tones; sometimes it is a spaced recurrence of vowels or consonants or both (yielding rhyme and assonance). No matter how alien the pattern may be to our ears, the factor of controlled rhythm is present or the discourse cannot qualify as verse. The definition of verse obviously depends on phonological rather than grammatical properties of the discourse.

But it is equally true that not all discourses which show evidence of controlled rhythm based on the manipulation of phonological features of language can be described as poetry, and poetry can occur outside the rigid framework of verse. However, poetic compositions so often make use of the form of verse for controlled rhythmic patterns that verse has come to be identified in the minds of many students of poetry as the sole component of poetic structure. But in addition to verse, poetic structure involves not only the

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13. Put quite simply, we can hear the elements which make up the formulas, lines, verses and paragraphs as sounds, but the images, themes and motifs and episodes which they contain cannot be heard as such but can only be perceived in the imagination as possessing a pattern of relationships or plot which add up to the tale.

phonological properties of language associated with verse form but also on the creative manipulation of semantic and grammatical patterns. The weight and significance of such non-phonological and verse-linked elements as part of the determinants of the ultimate character of the poetic structure of the present Ohafia narratives will be seen in the course of the following discussion.

6.2. BREATH-GROUPS AS POETIC LINES: PROSODY AND RHYTHM

Although it is common practice in the study of African oral poetry to regard the breath-groups of words heard in oral performances as constituting lines of poetry (or verse), the fact that certain fixed forms of words are sometimes delivered in a breath and at other times run together with similar entities in what may be described as extra-long or spiralling breath-groups has led some scholars to repudiate the breath-group criterion as inadequate and to seek other measures for the delimitation of the units which go into the making of the poem. Some scholars claim to have discovered metrical schemes in certain compositions in various languages but no convincing demonstration has as yet been given in support of these claims. On the face of it, it does not seem that the kind of metre sought by these scholars (i.e. accentual metre) is needed in poetic compositions in tone-languages; for the melodic effects of the kind which accentual metre imposes on the structure of compositions in intonation languages such as English seems to be inherent in the phonological structure of tone-languages. It would seem indeed, from the evidence available from the study of the structure of oral poetry in various African languages,

that poetry in tone-languages relies more on the variation of the inherent tone patterns of words and syntagmatic entitities for melody and on repetition and parallelism both for rhythm and for the combination of basic periodic units into larger structural patterns.

Perhaps, it would be wrong to discount the existence of metre altogether. But claims, such as that made by Ugonna (1976)[14] that linear units in Igbo oral poetry are composed of metrical units (igidi or dance-steps) which correspond to the foot in West European metrical prosody, are on the whole merely fanciful but misleading. Much more convincing is the discovery that linear units in a number of compositions which have been analysed in detail consist of distinctive segments variously described as "nodes" (Lestrade, 1937: 4-7), "rhythm-units" or "rhythm-segments" (Babalola, 1964: op.cit.) and "word-groups" (Fortune, 1978: op.cit.) But even these tell us very little about the true nature of poetic structure in African oral tradition, and on the whole constitute part of the unwholesome hankering after European-type of accentual metrical lines with each line comprising a specific number of feet, and each foot comprising a specific number and pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables. This perspective is generally misleading and conclusions based on it leave much to be desired.

In order to avoid such misleading conclusions, the qualities which mark out the breath-groups in the present Ohafia texts as distinctive units of poetic structure and on the basis of which they are here regarded as poetic lines

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14. Ugonna's concept of igidi has been criticized at length in a recent paper by his colleague at the University of Lagos, Sam Uzochukwu (1979).

will be approached pragmatically, in this section, through deductions based on a careful analysis of the text of one composition, Elibe Aja B1 (Text 17*). This particular text has been chosen because it contains few passages (lyrical or invocative) that are readily recognizable as verse, thus offering little chance of any kind of preconception.

6.2.1. Syllables, Tones and Stress Patterns in Elibe Aja B1[15]

With full tone-markings on the constituent syllables as well as an arbitrary but convenient mark indicating stress-patterns (an exclamation mark before the stressed syllable, e.g. egburi !gha), Elibe Aja B1 runs as follows (see Text 17* for English translation):

Example I : TEXT OF ELIBE AJA B1

1 O dị̀ ànụ olū na-àzha ọfya,

2 Àbịa èrina Arụ̀ mmadụ̀.

3 Ya bịa gbuna Arụ̀ mmadụ̀ ya-egbuna mụ̄o ewu.

4 Wọ chọ̄m̀be di-egbè jī egbè ègbuf!gha àwọ̀:

5 Onye yā-àbịa àgba anụ ọnwà,

6 A yà-àni yā nnū ọ̀kpòghò ìso,

7 Àni yā igbe ọ̀kàrà,

8 Àni yā igbe nwei.

9 Wọ jèwe m̀bèlège m̀bèlège wọ̀ ruo Ọkàgwe-Ọ̀gbàlàgà-Ndiibè-M̀màkụ̀.

10 Wọ gwēre mmāì wè nị muō sị: Unu āgbata ofịa-egbè ike!

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15. The stresses at the beginning of the breath-groups are not marked in the text since they are of regular occurrence. N/B. Tone = pitch (see n. 8 above).

11 Wọ sị Arụ muọ onọghọ ọjije mà onye olụ wọ:

12 Ọ dị anụ àbịa ulụè ègbuna unụọ madụ,

13 Wọ ndē ejèghị.

14 Wọ gaàga ogō mụọ.

15 Wọ dụ Ụdègbe-Ezi-Ànùnù --

16 Ebem Ujùrù-Kpokè-Nde-à-Mgbo-Ēnini,!wọ bàị ulụè Kamalụ Ọnwukā,

17 Wọ ni ịgbe mmàị.

18 Wọ gwère ịgbe mmàị ni mụọ!nusia:

19 Arụ ụnụ ọbịa nị?

20 Wọ sị anụ olụ àzha ofia ègbuna wọ madụ, o gbutugha mà ọ fụghụ, ò gburu ewụ.

21 Wọ sị wọnde ejèghị: Arụ unù owụ nde-èkpu-ohù!

22 Wọ nde ejèghị

23 Nde ohụ gāa aha Lunyā, !mùọ ọluale?'

24 Wọ gaàga ogō mụọ.

25 Wọ jèwè mbèlège mbèlègè wọ du Ekìdi-Nde-Ofoàlị.

26 Wọ jē bàị ulụè Nkùma Ōbirī-agụ, nwa Ọlà,

27 Di-egbĕ jī egbè ègburigha àwò, nwa NNe Āgbòokē Ezĕjī --

28 Nwa nde ākpa ngwụrụ lèghè ewu:

29 Egbuo wọ madụ!wọ anịghị àgba mkpū, ègbuo ngwụrụ wọ !gbara mkpū!gaa.

30 Oọ ibe a mụ Kamalụ Ọlùgu Ēbiri,

31 Òmèrè nde ēkpu olè.

32 Wọ sị wọ ndē ejēghi eje, wọ gaàga ogō mụọ.

33 Wọ jē bàị Ìbìnajī nde Egbènyi Ụkà.

34 Wọ dūru ulùè Olè Kamalū, òmèrè nde Àba Àhàbà,

35 Olē Kāmalū,!wò nụọ īgbe mmàì:

36 'Arụ̀, ùnùọ ọ̀bịa nī? Wọ̀ gwèkwa ife wọ bìà kpai.

37 Wọ sī wọ nde ejèghì mà onye olū wọ.

38 Wọ dū Ugwu-Nàka-Igbemînì, ya rī nde bī obì wọ wọ:

39 Nde māara ọgwụ̀ mà nwaàmì wò --

40 Ibe a mụ̄ Nnàa Ǹtè,

41 Ebūghi ụzọ̀ aha ejèghì.

42 Wọ nūgbàa īgbe mmàì, si wọ nde ejēghi eje!mà onye olū wọ:

43 Wọ gāàgà wò bia Nde-Awā-Èzèma-Elechi,!ogbogbom --

44 Ezhie ezhē āri imī lèghè nwantà:

45 Wọ zìtepūe ụzọ̀ wọ̀ azọ̀gbuo ekē ọkpà,

46 Wọ lapue alā àchii abuàlì àka,

47 Wọ jụ̀ èke mè wò ginī ǹkè abuàli yà-ème wọ!

48 O ībe a mù Ǹbìla Ōbu!

49 O ībe a mù Àjàdu Ūma Àjàdu!

50 O ībe a mù Kamalū à Ǹgwò è!

51 O ībe a mụ̄ Nnàa Ǹgwò,

52 Onye-Okē mere nde èbu ànwùrù èbu ākawa.

53 Èlìbe Àjà si ya ējè èje.

54 Nnā m Elìbe Àjà!turu.

55 Ya sō Arù-Oke Ìgbò wèe jerua ogō wọ.

56 Wọ sī lèlè ǹkò anụ ọhù àzịa àbịa ēgbu mādù;

57 Ogbutugha mādù mà o fughì ò gburu ewù.

58 Ǹnà m Elībe Àjà je fu agū,

59 Ime ofyā;!o mùì nwa a mkpu.

60 Ya gwère olā nwāntà ga-jē!gbue anù,

61 Ya ābiā gwēre anū ohù!na-ājai nwā ya aka,

62 Na-ājai nwā ya anu.

63 Èlìbe Àjà gbagbuo nne agū ohù,

64 Ya gbāgbuo nwā o.

65 Ya gwēre anu-eri-èbùlù gwèrè ni mūo mā Arù,

66 È ru àhù, Àrù gwère yā!ripue ezhè.

67 O wū agū ohù Elìbe Àja gbàà, oō nke wo jì èri ezìè mà ùgbuà!

68 Oō nke wo jì èri ezìè mà ùgbuà!

69 Wo wū Arù-Oke-Ìgbò, Ìgbe-Ekpē-ànàm-ète!

70 Elībe Àjà nwa-ūgbom ntà zìà àlì zo otō lua.

71 Amurù nde-ugbōm mtà,

72 Ebī-olà nà-àbia ubì à tana wō ofi

73 Èlìbe Àjà choro ebī-olà garì (ùwà) Amurù.

74 Ya nò hu okpukpu ebì-olà gbaa egbè,

75 Ànwuru okū egbè gbue Elībe Àjà --

76 Ife madu èmeta ikē bù yà lànì moṅ:

77 Ejī m Elībe Àjà mara ife madū èmeta ikē bù yà lànì moṅ!

The chart below (Chart 1) presents a schematic picture of the patterning of syllables, tones and stresses in the breath-groups of which the text is composed. The key to the abbreviations is as follows:

Column 1 (NL) - the number of the line;

Column 2 (IT) - the tone of the initial syllable (initial tone) of each line; (H = High tone; L = Low tone; M = Mid-tone);

Column 3 (TP) - the tone-pattern of successive lines;

Column 4 (SC) - the number of syllables (syllable count) contained in each line;

Column 5 (NS) - the number of stresses in each line;

Column 6 (LL) - the relative length of various lines,[16] long standing for lines containing 15 syllables or more and short standing for lines containing 14 syllables or less;

Column 7 (LC) - Line-codes representing short lines with the letter A and long lines with the letter B, thus revealing a pattern comprising of the pairing of short and short (AA), Long and long (BB), short and along (AB), and long and short (BA), in couplets, quatrains and similar units.

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16. This dichotomy is somewhat arbitrary, but it is intended to indicate what is essentially a tendency for long to respond with long, short with short, and short with long and vice versa. 15 syllables falls somewhere between the largest number of syllables per unit (29) and the smallest (6). In fact, the responsion between long and short often involves Units between 15 and 29 syllables and those between 6 and 14 syllables. But sometimes similar patterns may involve longer and shorter units within either units, eg. between 28-29 and 15-17 in the long units and between 14-12 and 6-8 within the short units.

CHART I

THE PATTERNING OF SYLLABLES, TONES AND STRESSES IN ELIBE AJA B1

1	2	3.	4	5	6
NL	IT	TP	SC	NS	LL
1	H̄	H̄ L LH HM H LH HH	11	1	Short A
2	L̄	L̄H LHH HL HHL	10	1	Short A
3	H̄	H̄ H HH HL HHL H HHL H HHH MH HH	17	1	Long B
4	H̄	H̄ MLH H HLH M HL LHHH LL	17	2	Long B
5	H	HH M LH LH HH HL	11	1	Short A
6	H̄	H̄ L LH M HM LLL LH	12	1	Short A
7	L̄	L̄H M HH LLL	8	1	Short A
8	L	LH M HH HHH	8	1	Short A
9	H	H LH LLLH LLLH L HH HLH LLLL HHHL LLL	28	1	Long B
10	H	H MH HML L H MH H HH MHH HH HL HH	22	2	Long B
11	H	H M HL HH HLL LHH L HH HM HM H	18	1	Long B
12	H	H H HH LH HLL LHH HLL HL	17	1	Long B
13	H	H HM HLH	6	1	Short A
14	H	H HLH HM MH	8	1	Short A
15	H	H M LLH HH LLL	10	1	Short A
16	H	HHH HLL HL HH L LH MHH L̄ LH HLL H HM MHM	28	2	Long B
17	L	L H MH HLL	7	1	Short A
18	H	H LH MH HLL H MH HHH	14	1	Short A
19	H	HL LL LLH M	8	1	Short A
20	H	H M HH HM LH HH LHH M HL H HHH L H LL L HH HL	29	1	Long B
21	H	H M HMH HLL HL HL HM HH LH HL	20	1	Long B
22	H	H MH HLL	6	1	Short A
23	H	HH HM MH HH HMM H̄LL LHHH	18	2	Long B
24	H	H HLH HM MH	8	1	Short A

25	H	H LL LLLH LLLL L H LLH MH HHLL	22	1	Long	B
26	H	H M LH HLL LLH MHM HM H ML	18	1	Long	B
27	H	H HLH M HL LHHH LL H HH MLHM HLMM	24	1	Long	B
28	H	H HH MH LLL LL HH	12	1	Short	A
29	H	HHH M HL $\bar{H}$ HLL LH HM LHH LLL L $\bar{H}$H HM $\bar{H}$H	27	4	Long	B
30	H	HH HH H L HHM LLH MHH	15	1	Long	B
31	L	LLL HH MH HL	9	1	Short	A
32	H	H M H HM HMH HH L HLH HM MH	18	1	Long	B
33	H	H M LH LLHM HH HLH LL	15	1	Long	B
34	H	H MH HLL HL HHM LLL HH MH LLL	21	1	Long	B
35	H	HM MHM $\bar{L}$ HH MH HLL	13	1	Short	A
36	H	HL LL LL M L LH HH H LL HH	17	1	Long	B
37	H	H M H MH HLL L HH HM H	14	1	Short	A
38	H	H M HH LH MHLL H M H H M HL $\bar{H}$ M	19	2	Long	B
39	H	HH MHH HL L HLL L	12	1	Short	A
40	H	HH H M HLH LL	9	1	Short	A
41	H	HMH HL HH HLL	10	1	Short	A
42	H	H MLH MH HLL H H MH HMH HH $\bar{L}$ HH HM H	24	2	Long	B
43	H	H MLL L HH HH HM LLH LLH $\bar{L}$HHH	21	2	Long	B
44	H	H LHMH HL L HLHH HM HL	16	1	Long	B
45	H	HH HM MH HM LL HHL	13	1	Short	A
46	H	H HHH HM LHH HHLL LH	15	1	Long	B
47	H	H L LH L L HM LL HHLH L LH M	18	1	Long	B
48	H	H MH H L LLH MH	10	1	Short	A
49	H	H MH H L LLH MH LLH	13	1	Short	A
50	H	H MH H L HHM L LL L	12	1	Short	A
51	H	H MH H L HLM LL	10	1	Short	A
52	H	HH HM HH HH LH LLL LH MHH	18	1	Long	B
53	L	LLH LL H H ML LH	11	1	Short	A
54	H	HM H HLH LL $\bar{H}$H	10	2	Short	A

55	H	HM HL HH LL LH HHH HM H	16	1	Long	B
56	H	H M LL LL HH HL LHH LHH MH MH	20	1	Long	B
57	H	HHH H ML L H LL L HH L	14	1	Short	A
58	L	LL H HMH LL H H HM	12	1	Short	A
59	H	HH HM H LL H H HH	11	2	Short	A
60	H	H LH HM MHL H M $\bar{H}$ HL	13	2	Short	A
61	H	H MM MH HM HL $\bar{H}$ MHH M H HH	17	2	Long	B
62	H	H LHH H H HH	8	1	Short	A
63	L	LLH LL HHH HH HM HL	14	1	Short	A
64	H	H MHH M H	6	1	Short	A
65	H	H MH HH HH LLL LL H MH M HL	18	1	Long	A
66	L	L H LL LL LH M $\bar{H}$HH HL	14	1	Short	A
67	H	H M HM HL HLH LH HLL HM MH H L LH HL L LHL	28	1	Long	B
68	H	HM MH H L LH HL L LHL	14	1	Short	A
69	H	H M HL HH LL LH HM LLH LH	17	1	Long	B
70	H	HMH LL H MHH HL LL LL H HM HH	20	1	Long	B
71	H	HHL HH HMH HL	10	1	Short	A
72	H	HM HL L LHH HL L HH M HH	16	1	Long	A
73	L	LLH LL HH HM HL HL LL HHL	18	1	Long	A
74	H	H L H HHH HL HL HH HL	14	1	Short	B
75	L	LHH HM HL HH HMH LL	14	1	Short	B
76	H	HH HH LHH HM L L LH HH	15	1	Long	A
77	H	HM H HMH LL HH HH HM LHH HM L L LH HH	25	1	Long	A

Similar patterns are discernable in other texts, for instance in the following extract from Nne Mgbaafo B1 (Text 28*):

21 Ọ lụ̄ yā à lụ ụmùnnē ya.

22 Mgbaàfọ Kalụ̄ turu Nnọng-Ìbìbìè.

23 Ya jèwe mbèlège mbèlègè jeruo aha Nnọng-Ìbìbìè è!

24 Nde Nnọng-Ìbìbìè nde-ugbom ntà wọ̀ gba-fụ yā:

25 'Nwatā nwāami, ì mèè àgị buru egbè turu mmà,

26 Gọ̀ ọ̀bìa nị̄ ogō wọ?'

27 Ya sị̄ ọ wūrụ unū egbule dī ya, egbue ya-gị̄, ya
chọ̀sà di yā.

28 Nde Nnọng-Ìbìbìè jụ yā di yā à zā̌ nị̄.

29 Ya sī, 'Ọ zā Ndùkwe Ēma!'

30 Wọ sī ọ: 'Ọ̀ bìà aha Nnọng?' Ya kwere.

31 Gọ olèlerì mkpughuru wọ gbùà ègbu

32 Gọ ọ jèe lèè à sì di gọ̄ ọ̀ nọ̀ hụ.

33 Nke ọ bīā wụ mkpughuru ọhù ya-àkwàghàrịa,

34 Nke ọ bīā wụ mkpughuru ya-akwāghàrịa.

35 Ya sị̄ di yā anọ̀ọ̀ hụ mà-onye olū wọ.

36 Ụnu amāghị ya hùwàrà di yā amā:

37 Mpā bù yà lā̌ àpàtà.

38 Wọ gāā ja lea nde ọrì wọ dòwèè ulùè.

CHART II

THE PATTERNING OF SYLLABLES, TONES AND STRESSES IN NNE MGBAAFO B1: LINES 21-38.

21	H	H M H L H H LHM H	10	1	Short	A
22	L	LHLH H M HH MHH LLLL	15	1	Long	B
23	H	H LH LLLH LLLL HHH HH MHH LLLL L	24	1	Long	B
24	H	HH MHH LLLL HH HHH HL L H H M	20	1	Long	B
25	H	HM MLH L LL LH HH HL HH HL	18	1	Long	B
26	L	L LLH M HM H	8	1	Short	A
27	H	H M H MH HM HHH M H H HH HM HL LL H M	23	1	Long	B
28	H	HH MHH LLLL H M H M L LH M	17	1	Long	B
29	H	H M H M HLH MH	9	1	Short	A
30	H	H M M L LL HH MHH H MH	14	1	Short	A
31	H	H HLHL HHHH H HLL LH	15	1	Long	B
32	H	H H LH LL L L H M L L H	13	1	Short	A
33	L	LH H MM H HHHH HL H LLLHH	18	1	Long	B
34	L	LH H MM H HHHH H HML HH	16	1	Long	B
35	H	H M H M HLL H L HH HM H	14	1	Short	A
36	L	LH HMH H LLL H M HM	12	1	Short	A
37	H	HM L L HL LLL	9	1	Short	A
38	H	H MM H HH HH HL H LLL HLL	17	1	Long	B

6.2.2. Syntax and Sound

Let us now attempt to understand the significance of the patterns revealed by these charts and to underscore their implications for poetic structure.

6.2.2.1. Syllabic Patterns

The syllable count in both charts reveals that the breath-groups are irregular in the number of syllables they contain. This rules out the possibility of any system of measure based on the number of syllables per linear unit (i.e. quantitative metre).[17] Nevertheless, one notices a tendency towards syllabic symmetry in contiguous units. In a number of cases we have pairs of breath-groups containing exactly the same number of syllables even though each unit contains a different set of words. Typical examples in Chart I inlcude lines 3-4 (17 syllables), 7-8 (8 syllables) and 74-75 (14 syllables). Since syllables in Igbo are, phonologically-speaking generally of equal length, each of such pairs of breath-groups would normally occupy the same time in the delivery of the songs and will thus be perceived by the hearers as a form of phonological parallelism.[18] Needless to say, syllabic parallelism will normally occur in the numerous cases of exact line repetition discussed below (section 6.3).

But syllabic parallelism need not only require the pairing or seriation of units containing the same number of syllables. There are numerous cases in the charts of

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17. See EPP: 497

18. See 6.4.3. below.

pairs of or series of lines which are approximately equal in the number of syllables they contain. In Chart I we have: lines 1-2 (11-10 syllables), lines 5-6 (11-12 syllables), 11-12 (18-17 syllables), 13, 14, 15 (6-8-10 syllables), 39-40-41 (12-9-10 syllables), 48-49-50 (10-13-12-10 syllables), etc; and in Chart II, we have: 30-31-32 (14-15-13 syllables) and 35-36 (14-12 syllables).

In these and even in other cases in which differences of two or more syllables exist, the audience will presumably still perceive a rhythmic pattern of syllabic symmetry on hearing such pairs or series of lines.[19]

6.2.2.2. Tone and Intonation

In Igbo, as in other tone-languages, each syllable bears a characteristic tone - high (H), low (L) or Mid (M), the last being a down-stepping of the high tone (see Igwe and Green, 1963 and Carrell, 1970: 1). Individual words have characteristic tone-patterns (lexical tones) which distinguish them from homonymous forms, i.e. forms comprising the same phonemic elements in the same order. Thus, with different tone-patterns, the form, isi, will readily be recognized by native Igbo speakers as three different words: (a) 'head' if its tone-pattern is HH (isi), (b) 'blindness' with a LL tone-pattern (ìsì), and (c) 'smell' with a HL

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19. Besides, there is frequent lengthening of syllables (6.2.4.3. below) and the use of musical slurs and drawls of the kind described below (6.2.3.2.) as lyrical interjections to make shorter lines containing fewer syllables more equal or even equal to neighbouring longer units with more syllables.

tone-pattern (isì). When words are spoken in isolation they need to keep in their inherent lexical tone-patterns for their meanings to be recognized; but when they are combined to form sentences, an intonation tune emerges in which the inherent lexical tone-patterns may be altered but without affecting the meanings of any of the component words. Thus in the sentence,

Example 3: o gàrà be èzè

He went to the king's house

the lexical tone of the nominal, ezè (HL) has been altered for the sake of intonation tune. Such intonational transformations of lexical tone-patterns (a feature described by linguists as grammatical tone-patterns),[20] constitute one of the melodic features of normal Igbo speech and a natural recourse of poets and singers.

(a) Musical Tone-Patterns

In poetry and song, grammatical tone-patterns are altered even further in order to create more melodic effects. Instances of this kind of alteration, resulting in what may be described as musical tone-patterns[21] are readily discernable in the text given above.

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20. On 'grammatical tones', in Igbo, see Igwe and Green (1963).

21. Similar variations in Yoruba poetry are discussed in Abimbola (1976: 84-92) as 'Tonal word-play'. Abimbola distinguishes twelve different patterns, each with two variations. The term 'tonal word-play' applies very well to similar patterns of tonal variation in the present Ohafia material. The patterns are however described here as 'musical tone-patterns' since it appears they are much more significant as components of melodic rhythm than as a kind of word-play.

In Elibe Aja B1, the hero's proper name, the normal tone-pattern of which is Elìbe Àjà (HLH-LL), is altered in two different ways in lines 53-63 and 58-70-77 respectively, while the normal tone-pattern preserved in Line 54. Thus we have:

in Line 53	Èlìbe Àjà	LLH LL
in Line 53	Elìbe Àjà	HLH LL
in Line 58	Elībe Àjà	HMH LL
in Line 63	Èlìbe Àjà	LLH LL
in Line 70	Elībe Àjà	HMH LL
in Line 77	Elībe Àjà	HMH LL

There are numerous other instances of musical tones all through the text :

In Line 9, m̀bèlège m̀bèlège (LLLH-LLLH) is sung with a tone-pattern of the kind one would expect to hear in normal speech, but in line 25 it is altered for melodic effect to m̀bèlège m̀bèlègè (LLH-LLLL)

In Lines 45-47, we have

Example 4a: Wo zìtepūe uzò wò azògbuo ekē okpà
Wo lapuo alā àchii abuàlì àka
Wo jù èke mè wò gini nke abuali ya-eme wo

Instead of, as in normal speech

Example 4b: Wo zìtepue uzò wo àzùgbuo ekē okpà
Wo lapuo alā wo àchii abuàlì aka
Wò ju eke mè wò ginī ǹkè abuàlì ya-ème wō

And in line 56, we have lèlè ǹkò (LL-LL) instead of lèle nko as would be normal in ordinary speech.

In the passage from Nnɛ Mgbaafo B2, we have one instance of the use of musical tone-patterns, not only for melodic effects, but as a means of avoiding monotony in

line-repetition and suggesting an emotion, in this case the singer's admiration for the courage displayed by the heroine when in the full view of the enemy, she goes into the battle-ground turning over headless bodies in the search for her husband:

Example 5: LH H MH H HHHH HL H LLLH (Normal Tone-pattern)

Nkẹ ọ bịa wụ mkpughuru ọhụ ya-ákwághárịa,

LH H MH H HHHH H HMLH (Musical tone-pattern)

Nke ọ bịa wụ mkpughuru ya-akwāghárịa (Text 29*: 33-34)

The following instances from other texts also illustrate a similar use of musical tone-patterns in cases of line-repetition.

Example 6: A_1 HH LH LL LHH (Normal)

Nne Ácho Ugó Ébele

A_2 HH HM HM HMH (Musical)

Nne Achọ̄ Ugō Ebēle

(Text 64*: 1-2)

Example 7: B_1 HMH HH HM HM H HLL (Normal)

Ebūghi isi agā ụjọ̄ nụ ikóró

HHH HH LH HM H HLL (Musical)

Ebughi isi ágga ụjọ̄ nụ ikóró

(Text 35*: 203)

(b) The Recurrence of Stressed High-pitch Syllables at the Beginning of Successive Breath-Groups.

Another prosodically significant aspect of the structure of the songs revealed by the charts is the fact that, with only a few generally explicable exceptions, each breath-group begins with a stressed high-pitch syllable. The co-occurence of stress and a high-pitch on the first syllable gives prominence to the beginning of each unit as well as

emphasizing the pause at the end of the preceeding unit.

Apart from the stress, one other factor that accounts for the prominence of the pauses at the end of lines and the first syllables of the lines is the phenomenon of tone-stepping which gives normal syntagmatic entities in Igbo what has been described as a "terrace-tone" intonation pattern. As described in Carrell (1970: 1), the "terrace-tone" type of intonation system is one "in which sequences of high tones may continue a preceding high tone level or step down to a new high tone level".

With this intonation system, every breath-group ends on a prominently low-level of pitch while the succeeding unit begins on a prominently high pitch-level. The overall impression is one of a steep rise at the beginning of each line and a steep fall at the end. The breath-groups are thus perceived by the hearers as end-stopped units. These units are not unlike the end-stopped line in metrical poetry and in certain portions of the songs, especially those which contain a long series of couplets, they help to form rhythmic patterns somewhat comparable to the oratorical and majestic cadences formed by means of end-stopped lines in heroic couplets (see example 49 below).

As pointed out above, the few instances in which breath-groups do not begin on high-tones are generally explicable. Most of these are phrases or clauses which complete the sense of the preceeding units (e.g. lines 7-8, 17, 63, 66, and 75); Others are less easily explicable, but this notwithstanding, the presence of

low-tone syllables at the beginning of breath-groups does not alter the end-stopped character of the breath units, for in a terrace-tone intonation system, a high-tone at the end of an utterance is by reason of stepping normally on a lower pitch level than a low-tone at the beginning of a succeeding utterance.

(c) Tonal Rhyme

The recurrence of high-tone syllables at the beginning of successive breath-groups does not only serve to give prominence to the beginning of successive breath-groups, it also constitutes a type of patterned recurrence of phonic elements which may be properly described as tonal rhyme. The resultant scheme of tonal rhyme is almost as rigid in the texts as the alliterative devices which signal the beginning of lines in the Somali poems described by Lewis and Andrezjewski (1964: 45-6).

The second type of tonal consonance in the songs may be described as emphatic tonal rhyme. Instances of this will be found at the beginning of each of a series of units (verses) presenting a theme, for example, the underlined words in the following passage:

Example 8: 1. Ya je ẹ̀ru ábàlị olū

It came to pass that on a certain night

2. Ọ̀hafīa bia nọ̀kọta Ebìri-Ẹ̀zhiáḳù:

Ohafia (warriors) came and gathered together at Ebiri-Eziaku:

3. 'Ǹdeà ǹnè ayī è ẹ̀me ẹ̀gbuo Onye-aka-mkpụ̀rụ̀ Liikē?'

'What shall we do that the short-armed one of Niike might be killed?'

4. Wo jē kùtu Ọ̀koro Mkpì.

They went and summond Okoro Mkpi.

5. O bìri Ìbìnajī wū Egbènyi-Ùkà.

He dwelled all the way at Ibinaji which is of Egbenyi-Uka.

6. Ọ wū onye bìbìe Ezhī-Àbaàba.

He was an oracle of Ezhi-Abaaba.

7. Wọ jū Ọ̀koro Mkpì:

They asked Okoro Mkpi:

8. Ǹdeà ǹne wo yà-ème wọ̀ egbua Liikē?

'What shall we do that we might conquer Niike?

9. Onye-aka mkpùrù ekwēgh alù Liikē!'

The short-armed-one prevents the defeat of Niike!'

10. Ya sī muo bànye odù-ijerè.

He ordered them to get into a nest of soldier ants.

11. Ijere dìnwa uzọ̀:

There are soldier-ants on the way:

12. Muo jì ogwù dọ̀we uzọ̀ -

You people should place an ọgwù on the way -

13. Ọ̀nye yà-àno odù-ìjerè àsui egbè ègbuo aka - mkpùrù-Liikē:

Who among you can sit in the nest of soldier-ants and charge guns that the Short-armed-one of Liike might be killed:

14. Egbè ìri àbuō!

Twelve guns in all!

If we approach the passage from our knowledge of the rhyme-schemes of conventional written poetry in, say, the English language, we would miss the significance of the rhyme patterns.

Looking at them from the surface, they may appear to be irregular and even incidental. But this is not so.

A close examination of the passage will show that the rhyming HM tone-patterns[22] occur precisely at points in the passage where new elements are introduced. We can see this more clearly from the following schematic outline:

Example 8b: 1. Ya jē eru abali olu (moment of decision, following a national emergency)

2. Wọ jē kutu Okoro Mkpi (the summoning of a helper as a result of the decision taken at a meeting of warriors).

3. Ọ wū onye bibie Ezhi-Abaaba (the helper and his authority to deal with the situation).

4. Wọ jū Okoro Mkpie (The solicitation of help from the oracle, the helper, who has now arrived)

5. Ya sī muo banye odu-ijere (the help, or recipe, offered by the oracle).

This shows that the rhyming initial position HM tone-patterns serve to pick out the main line of the narration, marking as it were, the beginning of line-groups or verses (6.5.1. below) which present new pictures of reality (themes).

Verse 1 (Theme 1): the calling of an assembly to deliberate over the problem posed by the invincibility of the short-armed one of Niike (lines 1-3). The beginning of the verse is marked by the HM formula, Ya jē (It came to pass). This introduces the temporal element, a theme which is developed in the following non-rhyming lines (3 and 4).

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22. This is not to imply that emphatic tonal rhyme is confined to HM tone-patterns. However HM tone-patterns occur more frequently in such initial-position patterns of tonal rhyme.

Verse 2 (Theme 2): the dispatch of emissaries to seek the aid of an oracle, Okoro Mkpi (4-5). The departure of the emissaries to Okoro Mkpi is introduced in line 4 by the HM formula Wo jē (They went), and the distance covered to reach him comes in the non-rhyming elaborative line 5, yielding to a two-line verse. Okoro Mkpi has been introduced to us abruptly without our being told why he is the one to be summoned to deal with so grave a situation as the one that faced the warriors. This generates the next theme:

Verse 3 (Theme 3): introducing the oracle's authority in a single-line paragraph initiated by the HM formula, O wū (He is, or was). His fame as a bibie (oracle) qualifies him to receive the solicitation made in the next verse:

Verse 4 (Theme 4): the solicitation of help (lines 7-9) is established in line 7 beginning with the HM Wo jū (They asked) and is developed in 8 and 9. These two lines echo line 3 and generate the final theme:

Verse 5 (Theme 5): the help offered. This is contained in the longest verse in the passage, introduced by HM rhyme Ya sī (He said) and consisting of the spoken words of the oracle.

Although not a matter of tonal consonance, some reference may be made here to a few cases of syllabic rhyme in the songs. Syllabic rhyme is by no means a regular feature of the texts, but it is occasionally employed as in the following examples for such rhetorical effects as: emphasis (example 9 below), antithetical variation in couplets formed by line-repetition (examples 10 and 11)

as well as for the conventional harmonic effect of end-rhyme (examples 12 and 13):

Example 9:

1. Onye-aka mkpụrụ ekwegh alụ Liike!
2. Onye-aka mkpụrụ ekwegh alụ Liike!
3. Onye-aka-mkpụrụ ekwegh alụ Liike!
4. Ezhi afa ya wụ Niiko! (AM, BI: 18 - 21)

Liike in lines 1-3 rhymes with Niiko in line 4.

Example 10:

1. Ibe ọrị wọ zokwe Ndukwe Emeụwa,
2. Ibe ọrị wọ dokwe Ndukwe Emeụwa,
3. Wọ je kutu Ndukwe (NM, BI: 31 - 33)

Example 11:

1. Ya daa Okpome ya mukwara
2. Ya daa ikwu-eri-abọ ya bukwara

(NM, CI: 11 - 12).

Example 12:

Cheo, nde a di mị?
Nde aha alọọtaala ike!
Cheo, nde a di mị?
Wọ sị di ọ luahe !

(NM, CI: 20 - 23)

Example 13:

Ya daa mụọ egbe nara
Daa mma gwekwara.

(NM, CI: 28 - 29)

This is not to speak of numerous cases of false syllabic rhyme in the form of the repetition of the same words at the end of various lines, a pattern of recurrence regarded by Green as a form of rhyme in Igbo poetry (1938)

(d) Stress

We have seen above that the first syllable of each breath-group in the songs - usually a high-tone syllable - is as a rule stressed. But apart from this, there is no other form of regular pattern of stresses in the texts, pattern of the kind that might suggest the existence of any type of accentual metre. It may well be that the regular occurence of stressed high-tone syllables at the beginning of successive breath-groups constitutes some kind of metrical pattern, but this is an open question, and further research is needed to establish exactly what kind of metre is involved.

Elsewhere in the texts, as will be seen from Chart I above, stress occurs selectively, as a means of drawing attention to an idea important to the development of a theme (e.g. in lines 18, 23, 43, 54 and 60) or for no readily discernable reason (e.g. in line 4 where the stress falls on the last syllable of the word egburi!gha in the syntagmatic formula, di-egbe-ji-egbe-egburi!gha-awo).

In other units (lines 10, 13, 29, 35, 59, 61 and 66 as well as in lines 18, 23 and 43), stress occurs somewhat as in the beginning lines, marking the syllable at the beginning of the phrase which comes after a medial pause.

6.2.3. Morphology and Meaning

So far we have been mainly concerned with the syntactical and phological properties of language which mark out the breath-groups in the songs as linear units of poetic structure. But the breath-groups are not only distinctive as syntactical and phonological entities; they are also units of meaning[23] (generally formulas or expressions with a formulaic matrix) marked out by certain recurrent morphological features.

6.2.3.1. Breath-groups as units with Formulaic Matrix

A careful examination of Elibe Aja B1 will reveal that the great majority of the breath units begin with the pronominal elements - wọ (they), ya (he, she, it) and ọ (it, that etc.). Some others begin with the proper names of heroes or local groups (e.g. Elibe Aja, Amuru, etc.). Still other units begin with various epithet formulas. Like the proper names and epithet formulas, the pronominal elements focus attention on the heroes and their actions, and on the situations in which these actions are performed. They are thus important as theme-markers, and generally form part of the narrative formula system of the texts (see 4.3 above). So regular indeed is the recurrence of some of these morphological elements (notably wọ and ya) that one can actually see a pattern of recurrence from a glance at various texts.

In Elibe Aja B1 (above), 27 out of 77 lines are initiated by the pronoun wọ (they) and the various theme-

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23. See Note 9 above.

marking narrative formulas[24] of which it forms a part. The scheme is as follows:

CHART 3A

SCHEME OF LINE-MARKING NARRATIVE FORMULAS

IN ELIBE AJA B1: 4-5

Line	Theme	Aspect	Narrative Formula
4	Action	Search	Wọ Chọ̀mbe (They searched and searched)
9	Action	Movement	Wọ jẹ̄we mbèlèqe mbèlèqe (They went mbelqeqe mbelege)
10	Action	Ritual	Wọ qwere mmai ni (They took wine and gave)
11	Action	Utterance	Wọ sī (They said)
14	Action	Movement	Wọ qaàqa (They went past)
15	Action	Movement	Wọ dū (They arrived at)
17	Action	Ritual	Wọ̀ ni (They gave)
18	Action	Ritual	Wọ qwère ī̀gbe maàì ni (They took a box of wine and gave)
20	Action	Utterance	Wọ sī (They said, i.e. asked)
21	Action	Utterance	Wọ sī (They said, i.e. replied)
22	Action	Utterance	Wọ n̄de ejèqhì (They would not go)
24	Action	Movement	Wọ qaàqa (They went past)
25	Action	Movement	Wọ jèwè mbèlèqe mbèlèqè (They went mbelege mbelege)
26	Action	Movement	Wọ jẹ̄ bai (They went and entered, i.e. At length, they arrived at)

24. See Chapter 4 (section 4.3).

Line	Theme	Aspect	Narrative Formula
32	Action	Utterance	Wọ sī (They said, i.e. declared)
33	Action	Movement	Wọ jẽ̄ bàì (They went and entered, i.e. at length, they arrived at)
42	Action	Ritual	Wọ ṅūgbàa...mmàì sị (They finished) drinking wine and said)
43	Action	Movement	Wọ gāàgà wò bịa (They went past and they arrived)
44	Situa-tion	Communal Behaviour	Wọ zìtepūe uzò (When they go forth from their home)
46	Situa-tion	Communal Behaviour	Wọ lapue alā̄ (When they are on their way back home)
47	Situa-tion	Communal Behaviour	Wọ jù (They boasting declare)
56	Action	Utterance	Wọ sī (They said)
69	Partici-pant	Communal image	Wọ wū (They that are...)

The recurrence of the pronoun wọ (they) not only helps to give prominence to the distinctiveness of the breath-groups and the themes or aspects of themes which they express; it also emphasizes the collective activity (the search for help) which is the main focus of attention throughout the first half of the song. In the second half, after the help of the Elibe Aja has been secured, attention shifts to the hero and to his action, and the singular pronoun ya (he) together with the hero's proper name, becomes the recurrent element at the beginning of the linear units:

CHART 3B

SCHEME OF LINE-MARKING NARRATIVE FORMULAS

IN ELIBE AJA B1: 53-75

Line	Theme	Aspect	Narrative Formula
53	Action	Utterance	Èlìbe Àjà sị (Elibe Aja said)
54	Action	Movement	Nnām Elìbe Àjà turu (My great father Elibe Aja set out)
55	Action	Movement	Ya sō...wè rua (He followed... and he reached)
60	Situation	Animal habit	Ya gwère...ga jē gbue anù (see translation, in Text 17).
61	Situation	Animal habit	Ya-ābịā gwēre anū...(see translation, in Text 17).
58	Action	Search	Nnà m Elībe Àjà je fụ (My great father Elibe Aja went and saw)
63	Action	Warlike act	Èlìbe Àjà gbagbuo (Elibe Aja killed)
64	Action	Warlike act	Ya gbāgbuo (He Killed)
65	Action	Ritual	Ya gwēre...gwèrè ni (He took ...took and gave)
70	Action	Movement	Elībe Àjà...zhìà àlì zọ ọtō lua (Elibe Aja...rose up and returned)
71	Situation	Devastation by wild animal	Ebīọlà nà-àbịa àtana wō ofi (A Bushhog was coming and destroying their crop)
73	Action	Search	Èlìbe Àjà chọrọ Ebīọlà (Elibe Aja went searching for the Bushhog)
74	Action	Warlike act	Ya...gbaa egbè (He fired a gun)

Line	Theme	Aspect	Narrative Formula
75	Situation	Death of hero	Anwuru ọkụ egbe gbue Elibe Aja (The smoke from the gun choked and killed Elibe Aja)

Perhaps, even more clearly marked in the texts than the above are a number of other units initiated by what we described in the last Chapter (section 4.3.) as the myth-creative deitic element, ọ wụ̄ (it is, or was; or, that is). This often occurs in the form, ọọ (the result of elision of the /w/):

CHART 3C

SCHEME OF LINE-MARKING NARRATIVE FORMULAS

IN ELIBE AJA B1: 30-68

Line	Theme	Aspect	Narrative Formula
30	Location	Hero's birth-place	ọọ̄ ibe amụ̀ Kamalụ̄ Ọlụ̀qụ Ẽbiri (That is the birthplace of...)
48	Location	Hero's birth-place	ọọ̄ ibe amụ̀ Mbìla Ọ̄bu (That is the birthplace of...)
49	Location	Hero's birth-place	ọọ̄ ibe amụ̀ Àjàdu Ụ̄ma Àjàdu (That is the birthplace of...)
50	Location	Hero's birth-place	ọọ̄ ibe amụ̀ Kamalụ̄ à Ǹgwọ̀ è. (That is the birthplace of...)
51	Location	Hero's birth-place	ọọ̄ ibe amụ̄ Nnàa Ǹtè (That is the birthplace of...)
67	Situation	Myth	ọ wụ̄ aqụ̄ ọhụ̀ Elìbe Àja gbàà, ọọ̄ ǹke wọ jì èri ezhè mà ùgbuà (It is the skin of that Leopardess which Elibe Aja shot, it is with it they deck their royal throne till today)

Line	Theme	Aspect	Narrative Formula
68	Situation	Mythological	ọọ̄ ñke wọ jì èri ezhè mà ùgbuà (It is with it they deck their royal throne till today)

Two other lines (lines 1 and 66) are respectively initated by the situation-marking narrative formulas ọ di (There was) and è ru àhù (in the course of the year), while with two exceptions (76 and 77), the remaining lines consist either wholly or largely of participant-identifying epithet formulas (lines 5, 16, 44, 52 and 71) or otherwise of phrases or clauses which complete the meaning of the preceeding breath-groups resulting either in anaphora[25] (lines 5-8, 61-64, and 67-68), or in a species of enjambement[26] (lines 2, 19, 36, 57 and 59).

The two exceptions are the last two lines of the song in which the gnomic phrase ife mmadu èmeta ikē dù yà làni mmon (What a man does very well leads him to spiritland)[27] is repeated.

Gnomic phrases of this kind, constitute one of the types of fixed, recurrent formatives which are constantly

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25. Anaphora is "the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of several successive sentences" (EPP: 37), see example 65, below.

26. "The completion, in the following poetic line, of a clause or other grammatical unit begun in the preceding line" (EPP: 241).

27. This and other gnomic phrases in the songs are of the order of proverbs. Proverbs are however used selectively in the texts, it being one of the canons of the art of the narratives, that the excessive use of proverbs is inartistic and distracting (see section 9.4 below).

uttered in various performances as independent breath-groups. Others are of the order of formulaic lines (breath units comprising entirely of epithet or narrative formulas).

6.2.3.2. Formulaic Lines

Formulaic lines are most clearly marked in invocative passages as a succession of breath-groups composed entirely of names and/or epithets, for example:

Example 14: Òdududu ndufù:

Ebūghị ìsi àga ụjọ̄ nụ Ikòrò:
Ebūghị isi àga ụjọ̄ nụ Ikòrò:
Arụ̀nsị Udùma Òlùgù:
Arụ̀nsị Òkàlị di Nne m̄ Arù:
Arụ̀nsị Agwù Òbàsị, rị Ugwu-nàka-Ìgbè-mini:
Arụ̀nsị a nọ̀ à minī rị a Nde-Àwa-Èzèma-Èlèchi:
Arụ̀nsị Ùmezùrikē, rị Ebìri-Èzhi-Àkùmà...

Odududu ndufu:
War-Drum, Who-if-he-does-not-lead-the-way-is-full-of-fear:
War-Drum, Who-if-he-does-not-lead-the-way-is-full-of-fear:
Ancestral Spirit, Uduma Olugu:
Ancestral Spirit, Okali, Husband of my Mother, Aru:
Ancestral Spirit, Agwu Obasi, from (the lineage of) Ugwu-naka-Igbe-mini:
Ancestral Spirit that dwells in the water down at Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi:
Ancestral Spirit, Umezurike, from (the lineage of) Ebiri-Ezhi-Akuma...

Example 15: M̀-m̀-m̀-gbàà fò!

Onye Nde-Àwà-Èzèma Èlèchi!

Di yā gàà aha.

O gaa aha Ìgbe Mmàkụ...

M-m-m-! gbaafo!

Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi!

Her husband went to war.

He went to the war of Igbe Mmaku...

The impression we gain, on listening to these and to passages of the same kind, is that of hearing a series of calls. Each call comprises a name, an epithet or a combination of two or more names and epithets. At the end of each call the chanter pauses to draw a breath before beginning another call. Thus we hear each call distinctly as a complete breath-group.

Another reason for the distinctiveness of the calls is that they are always uttered in an exclamatory tone of voice, so that we seem to hear the singer chanting at the top of his voice. Indeed, so strong is this exclamatory quality that there is always the temptation, in transcribing the calls from the tape-recordings, to add an exclamation mark at the end of each.

The breath-groups are also clearly discernable as calls in the lyrical passages. In these, however, the units are generally much shorter and more symmetrically marked out in addition by musical noises of the type underlined in the following example and referred to earlier (section 6.2.2.1)

as lyrical interjections[28]:

Example 16: Nne m̄ Orì Òkpò kwapụa:

È jì mmà gbuo gō̄ si egbe?

Ya wụrụ ejī̄ mma gbuo gi si egbe:

Nwa mụ̄ o jē̄:

Nwa mụ̄ o jè:

Èjì mmà gbuo gọ̄ sị egbè?

Nwa mụ̄ o ìyèjè:

Iyee-e jè:

Amòbgu o ìyègè:

Amòògu bìa anyī̄ jee-e ìyè:

Iyejeè i:

My mother - Oriji Okpu burst into a lament:

'Were you killed with a matchet or a gun?

Be it with a matchet or a gun:

Come, come, my son, o jē̄:

Come, come, my son, o, jè:

Whether you were killed with a matchet or a gun?

Come, come, my son, o ìyèjè:

Iyee-e jè.'

Amoogu, o ìyègè:

Come, o Amoogu, let us go, ìyè:

Iyejeè i:

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28. These lyrical interjections appear to be related to a little-known feature of common Igbo speech which involves tonemic patterns with slots which can take any vowel (v) or combination of vowel (v) consonant-vowel (cv) syllables to express various emotions. For example, the pattern HM-LH-M can take any of the 8 Igbo vowels (a,e,i,i,o,o,u,u) in the forms (aā-àa-ā!, eē-èe-ē!, iī-ìi-ī, oō-òo-ō! etc.) and in each case will be understood as expressing the emotion of pleasant surprise and excitement. A similar emotional appeal will also be understood with a combination of any of the vowels with such CV syllables as la, le, li, lo etc., as in alā-là-la-ō!, elē-lè-le-o!, ilī-lì-li-ō! olō-lò-lo-ō! etc. The so-called nonsense syllables in the refrains of many folksongs also appear to belong to this category of lyrical interjections.

The interjections in this and similar forms of embedded songs are lyrical in the sense that they serve to convey an emotion, be it of ecstasy or distress. In this case, the feeling is one of distress.

Not all embedded songs contain lyrical interjections; but where they are absent, the successive breath-groups are marked out, as in the invocative passages, by the fact that they consist of a series of calls. It is in this sense that the following example also from Amooqu Bl was referred to earlier, in Chapter 2, as a type of lyrical invocation (section 2.4.2.):

Example 17: Amoogū o-oo nwa Nne ō Orì Ùkpò!
Nwa Nne Orì-ejī Ùkpò!
Nwa Nne Orìejī Ùkpò!
O wū onye Àmuma!
O wū onye Ìrèma Ọ̀kpù̀rù̀kpù!
O wū onye Ùkē Etūm Olūmbà...
Amoogu-ooo, Son of Mother Ori Ukpo!
Son of Mother Orieji Ukpo!
Son of Mother Orieji Ukpo!
He is a person of Amuma!
He is a person of Irema Okpurukpu!
He is a member of the Etum Olumba age-set!

There is always something incantatory and reminiscent of the mode of ritual utterances in any pattern of words comprising a series of invocative calls; this quality is shared in common by the lyrical invocations and the invocative passages proper. But in the songs which occur at the end of narratives and which consist of solo lines

followed by choruses, we hear another pattern of rhythm, an antiphonal pattern of the kind generally found in folk songs[29]. Such rhythmic patterns are sometimes found in the embedded songs, but when this happens, the singer maintains the monotonic design of the songs by singing both parts of the antiphony, e.g. the following lyric embedded in example 49 below:

Cheo, nde à di mī?
Nde ahā alǭ-taala ikē!
Cheo, nde ā di mī?
Wǫ̀ si ǫ di ǭ lùàhe.'

Alas, where is my husband?
His comrades have all returned!
Alas, where is my husband?
They told her he must be on his way.

Needless to say, there is little difficulty in discerning the boundaries of the alternating patterns of breath-groups of which the antiphonal structure of passages of this kind is composed.

But the antiphonal pattern is not confined to the lyrical passages. As we shall see below, in section 6.2.5, it is often employed in the listing of heroes and in various stylized question-and-answer patterns in the main narrative passages, thus producing the antiphonal pattern of rhythm in these passages (e.g. example 66). However, the antiphony in the main narrative passages does not always echo the call-

29. The Ohafia term for folksong is abū-ọ̀kwukwe (songs with choric refrains).

and-answer (solo-and-refrain) form of folksongs. Quite often, as in Elibe Aja Bl, the pattern is antistrophic,[30] with the same or identical formulaic lines repeated at the beginning of a sequence of verses or paragraphs presenting a recurrent pattern of themes or episodes. Thus, in Elibe Aja Bl, the verses and paragraphs presenting the recurrent Aro movement from place to place in search of help is marked by the following repeated or parallel formulaic lines:

Example 18: 1 Wọ jèwe mbèlègẹ mbèlègẹ, wọ̀ rue (9)
They went mbelegẹ mbelegẹ, they arrived
Wọ jèwè mbèlègẹ mbèlègè, wọ̀ du (25)
They went mbelegẹ mbelegẹ, they reached

2 Wo gaàga ogō mūọ (14, 25)
They went past their ogo

3 Wọ dū (ru) + name of place reached (15, 34, 38)
They reached (arrived)

4 Wọ je bai + name of village or hero's house entered (26,34)
They went (came) and entered

The insistent nature of the problem is emphasized by the repetition of the phrase

Example 19: Ogbutugha mmādù ma ofùghu ọ̀ gburu ewù (20, 57)
It killed and killed men and when men fell short

30. Antistrophic is used here by analogy to the form of organization of the verse-like divisions of the choral ode in classical Greek drama. One such division (a strophe) was followed by an antistrophe (a "counter-turning") which corresponds in structure to the preceding strophe but with a different content.

it killed goats.

and the recurrence of the ritual presentation of wine is indicated by the repeated and analogical lines:

Example 20: Wọ gwẽre mmàị wè ni muọ̃, sị (10)
They took wine and gave them, saying
Wọ gwère mmàị ni muọ̃, ṅusia (18)
They took wine and gave them, and when they drank it all
Wọ ṅũgbà mmàị, sị (42)
They finished drinking wine, and said

In a similar vein the impatience of the Ohafia with the wily Aro is underscored by the repetition of the question:

Example 21: Arù, ùnù ọ̀ bịa nĩ?
Aro, what have you people come to do?
Arù, ùnù ọ̀ bịa nĩ? (19, 36)
Aro, what have you people come to do?

And their recurrent refusal to put their services at the disposal of the Aro is indicated by their declaration:

Example 22: Wọ ndẽ e jèghị (13,22)
They themselves would not go

and by parallel phrases in lines 21, 32 and 37.

The recurrence of certain formulaic lines is not confined to particular texts, but as will be apparent from charts 5 and 6 in Chapter 8, some formulaic lines recur not only in variant versions of the same tale but in different tales, thus like the formulas proper constituting one of the stable elements in the midst of the constant creative variations wrought by the same or different singers in the performance of the same tale in the same or different contexts of situation.

6.2.4. Other prosodic Features

Before summing up the rhythmic patterns produced as a result of the patterns of recurrence discussed in the foregoing, it may be useful to draw attention to a number of other prosodic features of normal Igbo speech which are sometimes exploited in the songs for various melodic, harmonic and rhetorical effects. Prominent among these are alliteration and assonance, assimilation and elision, and the contraction and expansion of syllables, morphemes and syntactic units:

6.2.4.1. Alliteration and Assonance

Generally-speaking, alliteration (the patterned and melodic recurrence of the same consonants in a line) and assonance (a similar recurrence of vowels) occur together in the same lines or series of lines in the songs. In the opening line of Amoogu B1, for example, a combination of alliteration and assonance produces a du-du drumming sound, which seems to foreshadow the reference to the hero in the next two lines as 'war drum' (ikoro):

Example 23: Odududu ndufu
Ebughi isi aga ụjọ nụ, ikoro
Ebughi isi aga ụjọ nụ, ikoro (AM, B1: 1-3)

There are some instances of the same kind of combination of alliteration and assonance in such fixed formulaic items as mbelege mbelege, ogbogbom and so on.

Sometimes, the combination of alliteration and assonance involves a play on sounds in such a way as to reflect on the theme expressed. A typical illustration will be found in the play on the harsh /gb/, /kp/ and /gw/ sounds in the

following lines from Elibe Aja Bl:

Example 24: 'Di-egbe ji egbe egburugha awo, nwa Nne Agboke Ezeji, -

Nwa nde akpa ngwuru leghe ewu,

Egbu wo mmadu wo anighi agba nkpu, egbuo ngwuru wo gbara nkpu gaa.' (Elibe Aja Bl: 27-29)

The /gb/ sound here is by far the most significant. Combined in various forms with the assonant patterns of /e/, /u/, and /a/ sounds, it helps to focus the hearers' attention on the central idea of violent killing by means of the gun through the repetition of the ideophonic words: egbè (gun), gbu (killing) and gba (escaping/shooting). All in all, the inherent ideophonic qualities of these words and the double meaning of words like àgba (shoot, run) help the singer to add the element of pun to the sheer melodic effects of the combination of alliteration and assonance.

6.2.4.2. Assimilation and Elision

Assimilation and Elision are a normal prosodic feature of spoken Igbo. While elision involves the deletion of a phoneme (usually a consonant) across morpheme-boundary, both for smoother pronounciation and euphony, assimilation functioning in like manner, involves the change of a phoneme (usually a vowel), also across morpheme-boundary, under the influence of an adjacent one. Three main kinds of assimilation are generally distinguished by linguists in Igbo, namely regressive, progressive and coalescent assimilation. Regressive assimilation involves the change a phoneme A to a following one B (A + B = B + B) while in progressive assimilation involves the change of a phoneme B to the

preceding one, A (A + B = A + A). Finally, in coalescent assimilation, as defined in Jones (1956), "the sounds A & C influence each other and coalesce into the single sound B" (see Nwachukwu, 1977: 108-109). It does not appear that coalescent assimilation is a common feature of the dialect of the present Ohafia songs, and no instances have so far been detected from any text examined. But such is the frequency and extent of patterns of regressive and progressive assimilation as illustrated in the examples, given below, that any attempt to represent them as faithfully as they really occur, in the transcription,[31] will result in texts that will be largely unreadable though accurate in their representation of prosodic features. The following proper names (of heroes) illustrate the form in which regressive assimilation occurs in the texts:

Example 25: (a) Amoogu = Ama(compound) + Ogu (god of retributive justice)
BB A B

(b) Mgbaafo = Mgbe (Day of) + Afo (Third day day in the Igbo Market Week)
BB A B

(c) Emuuwa = Eme (He that does not offend) + Uwa (the world, (ie the Society)
BB A B

Regressive assimilation is sometimes combined with elision, for example, the phrase ya-eme (will do) occurs as e ème in the line Ndea nnè anyī e ème (Amoogu B1: 32) with the /y/ in the inflectional prefix ya deleted (elided) and the /a/ changed to /e/. Progressive assimilation is similarly

31. The Northcote Thomas Collection of Igbo Texts (1911-13) is a typical illustration of such an attempt to reproduce the prosodic features of assimilation and elision accurately. Despite the accuracy of the transcriptions, the resultant texts are largely unreadable and have consequently been rarely consulted by students of Igbo literature since they were published nearly 70 years ago.

often combined with elision in the texts, a typical example being the transformation of the deitic formula, o̱ wū̱, in various texts, to the smoother and more easily pronounced form, o̱ō̱. Here, the deletion (elision) of the /w/ in wu̱ is combined with the progressive assimilation of the /u̱/ by the preceeding /o̱/. There are many instances in which the full form o̱ wu̱ is used, for example:

Example 26: O̱ wu̱ onye bibie Ezhi Abaaba

Example 27: O̱ wu̱ onye Eleghe O̱fo̱ka

Example 28: O̱ wu̱ agu̱ o̱hu̱ Elibe Aja gbaa, o̱o̱ nke wo̱ ji eri ezhe ma ugbu a'

O̱o̱ nke wo̱ ji eri exhe ma ugbua'

But in the last example, the singer moves from the emphatic full-form to the musical form, after making his point in the first. In other instances, the musical form is preferred:

Example 29: O̱o̱ ibe amu̱ Mbila obu'

O̱o̱ ibe a mu̱ Ajadu Uma Ajadu'

O̱o̱ ibe amu̱ Kamalu̱ a Ngwo e'

O̱o̱ ibe a mu̱ Nnaa Ngwo.

Here, we have another case involving a combination of progressive assimilation and elision, in the name Kamaalu a Ngwo (Kamalu son of Ngwo). This is a shortened form of Kamalu nwa Ngwo. In this the /nw/ of the associative (son of) in the full form Kamalu̱ nwa Ngwo is elided and regressive assimilation takes place changing the /u̱/ of the principal, Kamalu to /a/; thus we have Kamala a Ngwo.

We cannot possibly exhaust all the possible examples of assimilation and elisionin the texts; rather than multiply examples, we must now attempt to draw attention to their

stylistic role in the texts. As Emenanjo has pointed out in a study of these prosodic features in Onitsha Igbo (1972), the occurrence or non-occurrence of assimilation or elision in the ordinary spoken language neither inhibits nor enhances communication; it is rather purely a matter of style: "The failure to assimilate or to assimilate correctly" merely "marks a halting and laboured style". The constant occurence of assimilation in the songs is then primarily a carry-over from normal spoken Igbo, but as a prosodic device marking out the elegant from the laboured style, it has implications for poetry and generally serves as a means of smoothening the lines for easy and free utterence especially when as often happens the tempo of vocalization is speeded up under the constraint of the instrumental accompaniment.

6.2.4.3. Poetic Contractions

In various forms of metrical poetry, poetic contractions such as the dropping of phonemes (as in the cases of elision discussed above), or the dropping of syllables, morphemes, words or phrases, "are often used to keep continguous lines equal in number or syllables" (Preminger, 1965: 627). Although the verse of the Ohafia is not - so far as we know - metrical, there are some striking cases of poetic contractions which help to make the lines more symmetrical and the rhythm more regular.

One form of poetic contraction involves the deletion of phonemes, either the final vowel of a word, a medial phoneme, or an initial phoneme. In the following couplet, for example, the deletion of a final vowel, is used as a

check against monotony:

Example 30: Nde mụ̄ọ̀ àlogbàalarị̀ aha Ìsàǹtùmè:

Ǹde mụ̄ọ̀ àlogbàalarị̀ aha Ìsàǹtùm:

The deletion also yields a more emphatic consonant-stopped form (Isan-tum) from the poetic form (Asan-tume) of the place name (Asan-tuma). This consonant-stopped form ends in the sound - tum: which the audience will perceive as symbolizing the sound of a falling object, hence - incidentally perhaps - a prefiguration of the fall of the departed warrior, who as the lines imply does not return with his comrades-in-arms.

We find a case of the deletion of an initial phoneme of a word in:

Onye aka mkpūrụ ekwēgh alù Liikē

Onye aka mkpūrụ ekwēgh alù Liikē.

Onye aka mkpūrụ Ekwēgh alù Liikē,

Ezhi afa yā wù Niikō

(Example 9 above)

Here, the omission of the initial phoneme of the dwarf's name (Oniko) gives us the form, Niiko, which corresponds in sound to Liike in the preceeding line, forming one of the rare instances of syllabic rhyme in the songs, a rhyme which is all the more significant because of the way in which it highlights the identity created throughout the text between the military power of the Niike people and the magical power of their general, Niiko.

Quite often, we find shortened forms of names created by the omission of syllables or morphemes, for instance, the surname of Amoogu's mother, Orieji, is often contacted to Ori by the omission of the syllables /e/ and /ji/, so

as to produce a smoother line of song, e.g. in the following passage delivered at double tempo:

Example 31: Amoogū̃ oooo

Amoogū̃ o jē̃!

Amoogū̃ o, nwa Nne ō Orì Ùkpò!

Nwa Nne Orīejī̃ Ùkpò... etc.

(AM, B1: 98-104).

There is a similar case of morpheme deletion in the delivery of the name, Emeuwa, as Eme, in various texts of Nne Mgbaafo.

Sometimes whole words and phrases are omitted to produce elliptical, musical phrases, for example:

Òdududu ǹdufu (AM, B1: 1)

This is a remarkable phrase, which on the surface means:

Example 32:

Òdu	du	ǹdufu
He that leads	leading	leading (the act of) leading astray

But since this phrase is a praise-name it is obvious that it must mean something else. In fact, its actual meaning, as explained by the singers and other informants in the field, is "Daring leader who can lead his men to dangerous places from which he himself can return unharmed while his followers, who are less well equipped to fend for themselves, often get lost". To say all these in this elliptical form, many words and phrases of description have had to be omitted. The omission creates the ambiguously elliptical phrase which presents the hero both as a fearsome genius and a redoubtable warrior.

Similar contractions occur in two other phrases of much the same purport:

Example 33:

ebūghi uzọ̀ aha ejèghì

not leading the way war will not go

Example 34:

ebūghi isi àga ujọ̄ nū

not leading in front the going is with fear

The actual meaning of each of these two phrases is essentially the same ('He, without whose leadership, no one can go to war'), but the omission of some words and phrases not only produces a more musical phrase but also the personification of 'War' (in the first) and of 'Going' (in the second).

6.2.4.4. Poetic Expansions

Just as some lines are contracted in order to make them more symmetrical and rhythmical and to create certain aesthetic and rhetorical effects, some others are expanded by various forms of vowel lengthening, reduplication or addition of words, etc.

A significant instance of lengthening occurs at the beginning of Nne Mgbaafo BI, where the first line is the name of the heroine. On this, the singer wishes to focuss attention. To do this and at the same time make this single-word line more like the following lines, it is lengthened as follows:

Example 35: M̀-m̀-m̀-gbaà fọ̀

Onye Ndė̀ àwa èzèma èlèchi.

Di yā gàà aha

Ọ gàà aha Ìgbe Mmàkù

(AM, B1: 1-4)

The lengthening of the initial phoeneme /m/ is indicated

by reduplication in the written form. This lengthening is succeeded by a short hiatus before the /gb/ of the second syllable. The rest of the phrase is released like a gunshop /gbaf!/, as if to prefigure the central theme of the song: the march of the heroine through the battle-field in search of her husband.

6.2.5. Patterns of Recurrence and the Rhythm of the Songs

If we analyse the patterns of rhythm created as a result of the combined effects of the patterns of recurrence discussed in the foregoing sections, they will probably resolve themselves into two, namely (a) an incantatory pattern of rhythm based on the serial recurrence of the symmetrical breath-groups, and (b) an antiphonal pattern of rhythm based on the alternation of breath-groups of different lengths and duration. These two patterns of rhythm are closely bound up with the expression of themes and have an ethical basis in what may be described as the two fundamental media of Igbo traditional Igbo poetry, namely (a) ritual (èmùme) and (b) music (iri).[32]

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32. There is no body of performances in Igbo oral tradition which are exclusively regarded by the Igbo people themselves as poetry. But the verbal components of iri or music (see note 4, chapter 2) and the words or discourses (okwu) used in various rituals (èmùme) occur in forms, and possess features, on account of which they may be described as poetry. Ritual discourses, including those found in divination, prayers, ancestor-invucetions, malediction etc., are often in the form of itū-afà (see 2.1., note 1) or ikpọ̄-afà (see 3.2.4 above) and generally possess an invocative and incantatory quality.

The incantatory pattern of rhythm is bound up with the expression of mythological themes[33] and has an ethical basis in ritual while the antiphonal pattern of rhythm is bound up with the expression of lyrical themes and has an ethical basis in music.

The incantatory pattern of rhythm is a characteristic of the invocative passages, which as noted at various points in the foregoing, is manifest as the serial repetition of formulaic lines comprising strings of names and epithets and presenting the heroes of the songs as mythological figures with commanding heroic presence worthy of veneration. In these, the heroes are invoked in cadences similar to those of magical chants to come to the aid of the living or addressed as divine objects in supplicatory cadences reminiscent of the form of prayers.

The antiphonal pattern of rhythm is most clearly discernable in the lyrical passages of the songs. As we have noted at various points in this study, when these passages occur at the end of texts they are generally in the conventional call-and-answer form of folksongs, with solo lines alternating with choric refrains; when, on the

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33. Incantation appears to be an essential and universal rhythmic quality of epic and other types of heroic narrative poetry. According to EPP (542-543) there was perhaps a differentiation between the two major types of traditional narrative poetry, epic and ballad; 'Epic would have been performed by an individual or magician; ballad would have been performed by a dancing or singing group of devotees with a choral leader/who sang the burden of the tale, while the dancing chorus came in with a refrain, whether the myth became attached first to the incantation or first to the dance-song may be a moot point, but it would seem that we should think of the myth, or narrative, as being joined to two already existing forms, that is incantation and dance song, rather than of short forms becoming long or long forms being split into shorter ones".

other hand, they occur within the narratives, they mark points of intense emotion, be it of joy or sorrow, using the three conventional lyrical modes: akwa (lament), ùgòli (rhapsody), and nkpòkù (apostrophe). The antiphonal pattern of recurrence is often clearly discernable in the first two of these lyrical modes, even though they rarely make use of fixed choric refrains. However, in the apostrophic forms of lyric (nkpokù), we have an invocative pattern, hence an incantatory pattern of rhythm similar to that of the invocative passages and with this the ritualistic tenor associated with incantation (see 2.4.1. above).

In fact, there is no one-to-one relationship between the incantatory and the antiphonal patterns of rhythm and the invocative and lyrical passages respectively; nor are these patterns confined to these two types of passages. The antiphonal pattern sometimes occurs in invocative passages, giving it a musical and more intense emotional quality (see note 27, page 53 above).

We have so far dealt with the rhythmic pattern found in the two overtly poetic passages in the songs. What about the main narrative and oratorical passages? Do we hear different rhythmic patterns in these or the same dominant patterns? The answer is implicit in the data derived from the scrutiny of the text of Elibe Aja. Although the units of which the main narrative and oratorical passages are composed are no different in form from periodic units in common speech, the factors of syllabic symmetry, parallelism and repetition of lines and other patterns of serial and paradimatic recurrence confers on them the same rhythmic patterns - incantatory and antiphonal - as those found in

the invocative and lyrical passages, with all their ethical and thematic implications. Many instances of these will be seen in the discussion of repetition and parallelism in the next two sections. They include the combination of incantation and antiphony in the formulaic listing of heroes (Example 66), the incantatory quality of anaphoric repetition (Example 65) and cumulative parallelism (Example 63), and the antiphonal quality of various question-and-answer patterns (Examples 58 and 59).

It is however not irrelevant to the discussion of the rhythm of the songs to point out that performances are often referred to as ubùbò (conversation), and sometimes as ikpā ubùbò (holding a conversation) or ikpā ukà (holding a discourse).[34] From time to time, the usually breath-taking tempo of vocalization is scaled down and the overriding incantatory and melic quality of the narratives gives way to what appears to be straight-talking with the cadences of normal speech. Furthermore, there is always the illusion of normal speech cadences beneath the main narrative and oratorical passages, a feature apparently arising from the absence of mechanical metre, the rarity of inversions and such poetic licences, and the formal normality of the syntactic units.

All in all, there is something dynamic about the rhythm of the songs, a robust kind of pulsation reminiscent of the compulsive beat of the war drum, ikòrò. One can feel but not easily describe the effect of this drumlike movement of words, although in one of the terms for battle songs, the Ohafia people use the term ìkpèrìkpè to refer

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34. See note 1, chapter 2, for an earlier reference to this conversational quality of the texts.

ideophonically to it (2.2. above). The effect of this dynamic drum-rhythm on every Ohafia native is somewhat magical, and this is often alluded to in the testimonies of various singers and local connoisseurs. As Poet D, Ogbaa Kaalu has said: "it is in our blood. It does not matter whether your two arms and legs are paralysed; nor does it matter if you are crippled and sitting impotent on the ground, but the moment you hear its rhythm, it will revive your spirit" (see Chapter 9, section 9.4.2.).

The nativistic empathy with the rhythm of the songs described here, is perhaps a manifestation of what Envist (1964:26-27) has described as "phonetic empathy" in the enjoyment of poetry. This is perhaps bound up with what appears to be the dependence of the songs on the pure Ohafia dialect for their rhythm, for once any portion of the texts is transliterated into any other Igbo dialect, say the central idalect of Igbo urban dwellers, the inherent native, dialect-bound rhythm of the songs disappears.[35]

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35. With such a transliteration the opening section of Elibe Aja will sound as flaccidly prosaic as the following:

1 O di otu anu-ojoo owu na-esi o'ohya,
2 Abia erinara Aro mmadu
3 Ya bia gbunara ha mmadu ya egbunara ha ewu.
4 Ha chokata di-egbe-ji-egbe-mere-ihe-ngwuri-egwu
5 Onye obula nwere ike igbagbu anu-ojoo ahu,
6 Aga-enye ya nnu ego ise
7 Nye ya igbe akwa
8 Nye ya igbe uwe.

6.3 THE RHETORICAL ROLE OF REPETITION

As has been suggested in the foregoing, repetition and parallelism are the fundamental aesthetic and structural principles underlying the patterns of recurrence which govern the poetic structure of the songs. Needless to say, an item may be repeated in error, and unedited transcriptions of the songs show evidence of such erratic repetitions occurring as if they were patterns of parallelism. In the study of individual style, account may be taken of the frequency of such speech error data in comparing the artistic virtuosity of various singers; but here, we are concerned with traditional and creative patterns of repetition and parallelism which are unmistakably the consequence of deliberate contrivance, being significant as an aid to spontaneous composition in the oral performance, and as a means of maintaining the characteristic rhythmic patterns seen in the last section (6.2.5) or of creating rhetorical patterns for the effective presentation of themes.

Parallelism (the recurrence of lines or parts of lines with the same meaning or structure) is essentially a more creative and aesthetic form of the serial or antiphonal repetition. For this reason it will be given special attention in the next section (6.4) in order to underscore the richness and variety of its forms and the various ways in which the themes it serves to present, affect the emotions of the hearers and help to define the nature of the creative virtuosity expected of singers. But in this section, we shall be primarily concerned with delineating the patterns of repetition that occur in the songs and their rhetorical value. However, since parallelism is a form of repetition what is said here about repetition will also

apply to it.

Generally-speaking, a distinction may be made between four main types of repetition in the texts, in terms of their rhetorical function. The first of these may be described as formulaic repetition. This is a conventional manner of introducing the subject matter of particular narratives or restating a recurrent theme (6.3.1). The second type of repetition may be described as emphatic repetition. This is used to emphasize or focus attention on various themes in the course of the narrative (6.3.2). The third may be described as lyrical repetition in the sense that it conveys an emotional attitude or involves refrainic or melodic effects of the kind commonly associated with song (6.3.3). Finally, we have a type of repetition which imitates the duration, intensity or recurrence of the theme presented. This we may describe as mimetic or dramatic repetition (6.3.4).

These four types of repetition are not mutually exclusive. As we shall see below, the same pattern of repetition may involve two, three or all four types.

6.3.1 Formulaic Repetition

It is conventional for singers to repeat a line composed of the names and/or praises of the hero at the beginning of texts which begin with invocations (example 36 below), but similar repetitions may also occur in texts beginning otherwise (e.g. Examples 37 and 38 below).

Example 36: Odududu ndufu!
Ebughi isi aga ujonu, Ikoro!
Ebughi isi aga ujonu, Ikoro!
Odududu ndufu!
War-drum, Who if he does not lead the way is full of fear!

War-drum, Who if he does not lead the way is full of fear fear! (Amoogu B1 - 1-3)

Example 37: Nne Acho Ugo, Ebele!
Nne Acho Ugo, Ebele!
O bia muo umu nini iso!
Great Mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele!
Great Mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele!
She came in her time and begat five sons!
(Nne Acho Ugo B1 - 1-3)

Example 38: Unu mara ife meenu jiakpu na-egbu ewu?
Unu mara ife meenu jiakpu na-egbu ewu?
Do you know the reason why Cassara kills
Do you know the reason why Cassara kills the goat?
(Ji-akpu na Ewu B1 - 1-2)

The repetition of formulaic lines as discussed elsewhere in this chapter (sections 6.2.3.1 above and 6.5.2 below) is also a form of formulaic repetition. As we have noted, this form of repetition often gives rise to antiphonal or and antistrophic patterns. Another kind of pattern may be described as the envelope pattern, a pattern in which a line or verse recurs "in the same or nearly the same form so as to enclose other material" (EPP: 244). A line or significant phrase may thus enclose a verse or paragraph and a verse or paragraph may be repeated to enclose a whole song. "The effect of the envelope pattern is to emphasize the unity of the enclosed portion, to indicate that elaborations or parallels of statement have not

departed from the original focus. Also the repeated words carry an added richness and meaning from the intervening lines, sometimes acquiring an almost incantatory force" (EPP: 241).

A typical example of the use of an envelope pattern in which a whole song begins and ends with its opening words will be found in Inyan Olugu B1, a text which begins with the words:

Example 39: Inyan Olugu was a person of Amaeke Abam and was also of Eyen!
Killer that gave the honour to her husband, Inyang Olugu!
Great daughter, young woman of Eyen, O Inyang Olugu:
Her husband won no head in battle...

and ends with a verse containing much the same words (see 2.4.2. above)

Example 40: Young woman of Eyen, that was how she won a head in battle and gave the glory to her husband
So then Inyang Olugu gave to her husband the glory of battle
Person of Eyen Ezhiaku, O Inyang Olugu:
Ancestress Inyang Olugu, killer that gave the honour to her husband

The paragraphs discussed in section 6.5.2 below may also be described as possessing the envelope form, since each begins with the same or identical words as those in the beginning of preceding or succeding lines with the repeated lines enclosing the same pattern of actions and situations and "acquiring an almost incantotory force" with every

repetition - (see also Example 73 below).

6.3.2 Rhetorical Repetition

A more conventional role of repetition in oral poetry is that of creating emphasis. Orlik (1965) emphasised this role in his statement of the epic laws of folk narratives, and Levi-strauss (1965) associates it with the function of highlighting the myth.

Almost all the above-cited instances of formulaic repetition may also be cited to illustrate the emphatic role of repetition in the rhetorical structure of the texts. In example 37, for instance repetition serves to focus attention on the main character at the opening of the narration. The narrator might have said: "I am going to tell you a story about Nne Acho Ugo Erueghe", and so on. Other instance of repetition at the beginning of texts fulfil more or less the same function.

In example 36, what is emphasized is the legend behind the principal hero, Amoogu, and in example 38 attention focussed on the central myth repeated in the narrative.

Similarly in the formulaic lines, repetition serves to emphasize and clarify various themes: the movement from place to place, the ongoing ritual, the persistance of failure, the agreement of all heroes present to participate in the ordeal that would produce a potent charm against the common enemy etc.

6.3.3 Lyrical Repetition

In some cases, repetition serves to convey an emotional attitude which the singer wishes to the audiences to share with the characters in the narratives. It may be an emotion of joy (e.g. Example 30 and lines F_1 - F_2 of Example 49) or of joy (e.g. Example 17, and the song at the end of Texts 28*, 32* and 42*).

6.3.4 Mimetic Repetition

The fourth kind of repetition is mimetic in the sense that it dramatically re-echoes the insistent tone of an interrogation, the duration of an action etc. When Nne Mgbaafo (Texts 29 & 33*) arrives in the enemy camp and demands to see her husband, the flabbergasted enemy bring her husband out from prison and question her about her mission. The insistent tone of this interrogation is dramatically re-enacted by means of repetition in the text:

Example 41: Wo je kutu Ndukwe
"Go o luo onye?
"Go o luo onye?
"Minye go aza ni? (lines 33-36)

They went and called Ndukwe
"who are you married to?
"who are you married to?
"Your wife, what name does she bear?

Similarly, the number of times an action is performed may be suggested by the number of times the line denoting that action is reapeated. For example, in Amoogu B1, we are told that Amogu (the hero) charged two guns and gave to the generals, Awa Afaka and Mbu Olugu, who then take the guns and go to kill the Niike Dwarf. Both the lines presenting the charging of the two guns and the presenting the two generals who receive the guns are repeated twice:

Example 42: Ya sụị ọnwa sụị ọnwa

Ya sụị ọnwa sụị ọnwa

Nna m Awa Afaka daa ya egbe nara

Mbụ Ọlọghọ daa ya egbe nara

He charged this one, charged that one

He charged this one, charged that one

My great father, Awa Afaka took one gun from him

My great father Mbu Ologho took one gun from him

6.4 AESTHETIC PATTERNS OF PARALLELISM

As indicated in the foregoing section, parallelism is a special and more aesthetically significant type of repetition. Divided in this section into two major categories - semantic and structural - parallelism adds creative variety and even complexity to the basic roles of repetition through the serial or paradigmatic patterning of (a) lines using identical or completely different forms of words (syntactic forms) to express the same meaning, or (b) lines possessing the same or identical grammatical or phonological structure but expressing different or diametrically opposed meanings.

6.4.1 Semantic Parallelism

Four main types of semantic parallelism may be distinguished in the poetic structure of the songs. The first, which is based on the identity of meaning between parallel lines may be described as synonymous parallelism (6.4.1.2); the second which is based on antithesis may be described as antithetical parallelism (6.4.1.2); the third

which is based on complementation may be described as complementary parallelism (6.4.1.3); and the fourth which is based on the enlargement of an idea by the presentation of additional, varied or related ideas may be described as cumulative or synthetic parallelism (6.4.1.4)

6.4.1.1 Synonymous Parallelism

This is much the same in character and function as the cases of repetition described above. In this case however, variety, emphasis and rhetorical balance are achieved by means of significant changes in the form of the second parallel line. These changes are of three main types: Rephrasing, omissions or morphemes, and changes in grammatical mood.

(a) Emphasis through Rephrasing

The rephrasing of the second parallel line generally results in anastrophic patterns such as the following:

Example 43: (Nne Mgbaafo, B1: the heroine, speaking of her husband)

A_1 Assertion Di ya wụ ezhi di (Her husband was a good husband she was married to)

A_2 Rephrasing Ọ wụ ezhi di ya lụọ (It was a good husband she was married to)

(lines 15-16)

Example 44: (Nne Mgbaafo, B1: introducing the heroine's husband)

A_1 Assertion Di ya aza Ndukwe Emea (Her husband bears the name Ndukwe Emea)

A_2 Rephrasing Ọ za Ndukwe Emea ma di ya (He bears the name Ndukwe Eme, that husband of hers)

(lines 10-11)

Example 45: (Inyan Olugu, B1: introducing the heroine)

A_1 Assertion Inyan Olugu wu onye Eyen (Iyan Olugu was a person of Eyen)

A_2 Rephrasing Oo nwa nwaami Eyen (She was a young woman of Eyen)

(b) Emphasis through the Omission of Morphemes and Formulas

The omission of verbs, pronouns, nouns or whole phrases, as in the following, prunes out excesses in the second line of two parallel lines making it more terse and emphatic than the first:

Example 46: (Nne Mgbaafo, B1)

A_1 Assertion Mgbaafo turu di ya, ya choro di ya, gajepua aha Igbe Mmaku (Mgbaafo followed her husband, and she went in search of her husband, went and reached the warfront at Igbe Mmaku)

A_2 Rephrasing Mgbaafo turu di ya gajepua aha Ibge Mmaku (lines 8-9)

The underlined phrase in the first line is omitted in the second.

Example 47: (Elibe Aja, B1: the closing moral)

A_1 Assertion O wu agu ohu Elibe Aja gbaa, oo nke wo ji eri ezhe ma Egbua (It is the leopardess which Elibe Aja shot, it is with its skin that they decorate their kings till today)

A_2 Rephrasing Oo nke wo ji eri ezhe ma ugbua (It is with its skin that they decorate their kings till today)

(lines 68-69)

(c) Emphasis through a Change in Grammatical Mood

Finally, emphasis may be achieved in a second line through a change in grammatical mood. For example, in the following couplet, we have a change from the optative mood of B_1 to the imperative mood in B_2.

Example 48: (Nne Mgbaafo, B2: Ndukwe Eme to his captors, after he has been informed of the arrival of his wife)

A_1 Ya si "Unuo ji agbu kea ya okpa
(He said, "You have bound my feet with ropes)

B_1 Request "Ma atọpụrụnụ ya agbụ ọnwa ya eje fụ sị ọ minye ya
(If only you could unbind me so I will go and see if she is indeed my wife)

B_2 Command "Atọpụ ya agbụ ya je fụ sị ọ minye ya!
(Unbind me that I may go and see if she is indeed my wife!)

(lines 42-44)

6.4.1.2 Antithetical Parallelism

In this variety of semantic parallelism, the idea contained in the second line is diametrically opposed to that contained in the first. Alternately, the two ideas counterbalance one another. The antithesis may involve nominal elements (characters and objects) or verbal elements (actions or situations).

(a) Antithetical Parallelism Involving Nominal Elements

The Igbo in general interpret and understand reality in terms of pairs which naturally stand together or stand against one another. Thus, for instance, the pairs nne-nà-nnà (mother and father) and egbè-nà-mmà (gun and matchet) stand

naturally together while the pairs onwu-nà-ndù (death and life), akwa-nà-ochì (tears and laughter) and mmon-nà-mmadù (spirits and humans) are naturally opposed to one another[36]. On account of this tendency to see things in pairs, Igbo art like most traditional arts is dominated by the idea of balance. Iconically and lexically, thepairs represent natural collocates. To mention one is to invite the necessity to mention the other, otherwise the impression would be created that there was something missing. In this, nature is the perfect teacher. In the human body, for example, there are two hands, two legs, two breasts, two eyes, two nostrils and so on. This dualism is reflected in the importance attached to the number two in traditional symbolism of numbers and in the balancing of parts in traditional design, painting, music and sculpture. Where this kind of balancing occurs in the songs - as in the following passage from Nne Mgbaafo, C1 - it results in patterns of parallelism which exhibit the palpable beauty and solidity of a piece of architecture with paired-lines or couplets looking somewhat like an arrangement of blocks

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36. On this tendency in the Igbo artistic tradition, Ekwueme writes as follows: 'Balance and symmetry tend to be (in the Igbo man's eyes) nature's form of creative construction. Many things come in pairs of approximately equal (at least as far as it is visible to the naked eye) proportions. The Igbo, therefore, express many ideas (in words as well as in thought) in balanced or counterbalanced dualities: heaven and earth, day and night, man and woman, fire and water, black and white, ji (yam) and edè (coco-yam), anụ (meat) and azù (fish). Many Igbo adults will not accept gifts that do not come in pairs and will reject milk from one breast. Where there is a lack of proportion, balance or equality, there is an error in concept or an accident in the execution of form" (1972: 347 - 348). The same point is made in Udechukwu (1972), Okeke (1973) and Aniakor (1975).

in a wall:

Example 49: (Soon after getting married to the heroine, Mdukwe Eme departs for the great battle of Asantume)

A_1 Ya daa okpome mụkwara
A_2 Ya daa ikwu-eri-abọ ya bukwara
B_1 Ọ da mmọn ọ da ochị
B_2 Ọ da mmadu ọ da akwa
C_1 Ya turu aha Ịsantume gajea!
D_1 Nde mụọ alọgbaalarị aha Ịsantume!
D_2 Nde mụọ alọgbaalarị aha Ịsantume!
E_1 Nne Mgbaafọ nne ya!
E_2 Nne Mgbaafọ dị ya!
F_1 Cheo, nde a di mị?
G_1 Nde aha alọ-taala ike!
F_2 Cheo, nde a di me!
G_2 Wọ sị ọ di ọ lụahe!
H_1 Cheo, Nne Mgbaafọ lea anya di ya ọ lụọghụ alụa!
H_2 Cheo, Nne Mgbaafọ nwa nne Dike Ọkwara Agwụ!
I_1 Nwa nde eri isi anighị eri agba
I_2 Nwa nde eri isi anighị eri agba
J_1 Ya daa mụọ egbe nara
J_2 Daa mma gwekwara

Translation

A_1 He took a matchet and sharpened it
A_2 He took a man-of-the matrician-of them-that-eat-two-at-a-gulp (i.e. gun) and slung it on
B_1 Be it spirits or be it laughter
B_2 Be it humans or be it tears.

C_1 He set out and want to the war of Isantume

D_1 His comrades had all returned from the battle of Isantume!

D_2 His comrades had all returned from the battle of Isantume!

E_1 Great mother Mgbaafo cried out to her mother

E_2 Great mother Mgbaafo cried out to her husband

F_1 Alas, where is my husband?

G_1 His comrades have all returned!

F_2 Alas, where is my husband?

G_2 They told her he must be on his way!

H_1 Alas, great mother Mgbaafo looked out for her husband but he did not return

H_2 Alas, great mother Mgbaafo, daughter of the brother of Dike firstborn son of Agwu -

I_1 Daughter of them that eat the heads of animals and not their jaws

I_2 Daughter of them that eat the heads of animals and not their jaws

J_1 She went and took a gun from them

J_2 And from them she took a matchet

There is hardly any of the seven couplets and the quatrain ($F_1G_1F_2G_2$) in which one kind of semantic antithesis or another does not occur. We have, for example, in matchet vs gun in A_1A_2 and in J_1J_2; mother vs husband (i.e. father) in E_1E_2; and head vs jaw in I_1I_2. In B_1B_2 the antithesis is extensive, operating at both the literal and the figurative levels simulataneously. On the literal level we have spirit vs human and laughter vs tears on the vertical axes, spirits vs laughter and humans vs tears on

the horizontal axes, and on the diagonal axes, spirits vs tears and humans vs laughter. On the figurative level, spirits and tears are consistently understood as symbols of death while human and laughter are consistently understood as symbols of life - thus there is an overall lexical and semantic antithesis between the natural antimonies of life and death. This couplet is further discussed in section 6.5.11 below.

(b) Antithetical Parallelism involving Verbal Elements

The first couplet of Example 49 above (i.e. A_1A_2) contains an illustration of this variety of lexical and semantic antithesis:

Example 50:

A_1 Ya daa okpome mukwara

A_2 Ya daa ikwu-eri-abọ ya bukwara

Translation

A_1 He took a matchet and sharpened it

A_2 He took his (gun) and carried it

A similar contrast involving verbal elements occurs in the following couplet from Nne Mgbaafo, B2:

Example 51: (responding to the heroine's bold confrontation with them, the enemy fetch her imprisoned husband)

A_1 Ibe ọrị wo dokwe Nudkwe Emeuwa

A_2 Ibe ọrị wo ɒokwe Ndukwe Eneuwa

B_1 Wo je jutu Ndukwe

Translation

A_1 That place where they kept away Ndukwe Emeuwa

A_2 That place where they hid away Ndukwe Emeuwa

B_1 They went there and called Ndukwe

The semantic implications of these lexical contrasts are clearly perceptible even in translation: they create a sense of balance or completeness - as in the contrasts involving nominals - by presenting parallel or successive stages of the same action of situation. Thus, in Example 41 mu (sharpen) and bu (carry) present successive stages in the arming of a hero while, in Example do (keep) and zo (hide) present the confinement of Ndukwe Emeuwa from two angles, one general, the other particular.

6.4.1.3 Complementary Parallelism

Here again we may distinguish patterns of SP involving nominal elements (epithets) and those involving verbal elements (narrative formulas). In both types, the first of two or more parallel lines presents a character (or an object) or otherwise describes an action (or situation) while the second and other subsequent lines (where such lines occur) supply further information about them.

(a) Patterns of Complementary Parallelism Involving Epithet Formulas

These are commonly found in the invocative passages. In these patterns, the first lines usually contain a direct reference, by name or in general terms, to a character or object while the second and any subsequent lines contain an elaboration by means of an epithet or a string of epithets. Reference and elaboration are often linked together with apposition as in Examples 14 and 15 below:

Example 52: (Reference and elaboration linked by apposition)

A_1	Mgbaafọ (name of heroine)	reference
A	Onye Nde-Awa-Exema-Elechi (associative epithet)	elaboration

Example 53: (Reference and elaboration linked by apposition)

A_1	Amoogu Oloki Ikpo (name of hero)	reference
A_2	Nwa Ọhafia Udumezema e (associative epithet)	elaboration I
A_3	Dụdụdụ ndụfụ (descriptive epithet)	elaboration II
A_4	Ikoro (descriptive epithet)	elaboration III

Amoogu, C1, lines 1-4

(b) Patterns of Complementary Parallelism Involving Verbal Formulas

In these patterns the reference in the first line is to an action or a situation while the elaboration in the second adds important information omitted in the first. In the following, for example, the additional information contained in the second line is a specification of the exact manner in which the action presented in the first was performed:

Example 54:

A_1	Reference	Ya gbuo ọ (He killed him)
A_2	Elaboration	Ya gbupuo ọ isi (He chopped off his head)

In the following, the first lines present an action while the second lines tell us why and how the action is performed:

Example 55:

A_1	Reference	Mgbaafo Kalu turu Nnon-Ibibie (Mgbaafo set out for Nnon-Ibibie)
A_2	Elaboration	Ya jewe mbelege mbelege jeruo aha Nnon-Ibibie (She went Mbelege mbelege until she reached the battle front at Nnon-Ibibie)

Example 56: (Elibe Aja, B1: Aro war chiefs pleading for help from Ohafia warriors)

A_1 Reference Wo ni igbe mmai (They gave a cask of wine)

A_2 Elaboration Wo gwere igbe mmai ni muo, nusia! (They took a cask of wine, gave it to them, and they drank it all!)

(lines 17-18)

Example 57: (Amooqu, B1: the reason why Amoogu's assassins agree to cut down the silk cotton tree overlooking his mother's hut)

A_1 Reference Okuku bekwe ebenyi (That fowls may no longer perch there)

A_2 Elaboration Okuku zupuera Nne e Ori Ukpo (That fowls may breed and multiply for great mother Ori Ukpo)

(lines 175-176)

In general, question-and-answer couplets, such as the following, represent instances of complementary parallelism, with the answer providing information not contained in the first:

Example 58: (Nne Mgbaafo, B1: the heroine interrogated by friendly people whom she meets on her way to enemy territory)

A_1 Question/Reference Wo si Mgbaafo go oluo ole? (They questioned Mgbaafo, "Where are you going"?)

A_2 Answer/Elaboration Ya si ya choje di ya (She answered, "I am going to find my husband".

(lines 20-21)

Example 59: (Nne Mgbaafo, B1: the enemy to the heroine)

A_1 Question/Reference Di gọ ọ za nị? (Your husband, what name does he bear?)

A_2 Answer/Elaboration Yasị ọza Ndukwe Emeuwa (She answered that he bore the name, Ndukwe Emeuwa) (lines 36-37)

A fourth variety of complementary parallelism involves the presentation of two successive action, each action occupying a line, as in the following examples:

Example 60: (Nne Mgbaafo, B1: the enemy unbind the heroine's captive husband and bring him before her in their village-square)

A_1 Parallel action I Wọ daa ya agbụ toa! (They took him and untied his bonds)

A_2 Parallel action II Wọ kuru ya pụsa ife ogo (They carried him and brought him to the light of their village-square)

(lines 47-48)

Finally, we have instances of complementary parallelism in which an idea is merely hinted at in the first line and specified in the second, for example:

Example 61: (Nne Mgbaafo, B2: the heroine, to her husband's captors)

A_1 Hint Nde Nnọn Ibibie wọ gbaa ikpu (Nnon Ibibie people, they agreed among themselves)

A2 Specification E gwere Ndukwe Eme nị Mgbaafọ Kaalụ (Ndukwe Eme was taken and given to Mgbaafo Kaalu) (lines 37-38)

Finally, there may be an abrupt halt midway in the utterance of a line (i.e. aposiopesis). In cases of this kind, the idea "swallowed up" is supplied in the second line, for example:

Example 62 (Nne Mgbaafo, B1)

A_1 Incomplete idea — Nde Ohu nde-ugbom-nta (Those people, dear little ones)

A_2 Completed idea — Igbe Mmaku si e gbule nwaami ohu! (Igbe Mmaku people, they said that that woman should not be killed!)

(lines 42-43)

6.4.1.4. Synthetic or Cumulative Parallelism

The tendency to seek emphasis and clarity by means of alternative phrasing generally leads to an increase in thematic patterns. This kind of enlargement is often used to add weight to a character or situation. In the following passage, for example, a series of alternative phrases are used to suggest the time and patience expended by the heroine in her lonely search for her possibly dead husband among dead bodies piled up in heaps in the battle field:

Example 63 (Nne Mgbaafo, C1, 47-52)

A_1 Nne Mgbaafo, ibe orusa, ya kwaata ozu

Great mother Mgbaafo, wherever she went, she pushed and pushed over dead bodies

A_2 Ibe o rusaa, ya shietaa ozu

Wherever she went, she tugged and tugged at dead bodies

A_3 Nne Mgbaafo shiehaa ozu ohu

Great mother Mgbaafo tugged and tugged at those dead bodies

B_1 Ma o letu o ya-afu di ya afu

In the hope that she might catch a glimpse of her husband

A_4 Nne Mgbaafo ya eje eshie ozu ohu

Great mother Mgbaafo, she went on tugging at those dead bodies

B_2 Ya fu Ndukwe Emeuwa

She saw Ndukwe Emeuwa!

6.4.2. Structural Parallelism

From what we said of structural parallelism at the beginning of this section, a distinction may be made between two main types, namely (a) grammatical parallelism (based on the correspondence in the grammatical structure of two or more adjacent or alternative lines); and (b) phonological parallelism (based on the correspondence in the tone-patterns of similarly positioned lines).

6.4.2.1. Grammatical Parallelism

Two main types of grammatical parallelism (GP) may be distinguished. The first involves the serial repetition of two or more lines which have the same grammatical structure, as in all cases of repetition and of synonymous and antithetical parallelism examined above. The second involves the inchoate recurrence of a large stock of lines with the same grammatical structure in the same or widely separated episodes or in different stories altogether.

These two types of grammatical parallelism are dealt with here mainly with a view to demonstrating the various ways in which they manifest themselves as mnemonic patterns copied and reproduced by analogy in the processes of creative improvisation involved in oral verse-making.

Type I: Serial Parallelism of Grammatical Patterns

Especially in the invocative and lyrical passages, and occasionally in the main narrative and oratorical passages, there is a tendency for one or more subsequent lines to be formed by analogy to the grammatical structure of the first. This may involve a series of adjacent lines, for example:

Example 64 (Elibe Aja, B1: presenting the hero's birthplace, Asaga)

Oo ibe a mụ Mbila Obu

That is the birthplace of Mbila Obu

Oo ibe a mụ Ajadu Ụma Ajadu

That is the birthplace of Ajadu son of Uma Ajadu

Oo ibe a mụ Kamalụ a Ngwo e!

That is the birthplace of Kamalu son of Ngwo!

Oo ibe a mụ Nnaa Ngwo

That is the birthplace of great father Ngwo

(lines 49-53)

In anaphoric repetitions such as the following, the noun phrase may be deleted after the first line in order to focus attention on the key verb (i.e. the verb which carries the main idea in a theme), but the same grammatical patterns are clearly implied:

Example 65 (Elibe Aja, B1: Aro promises to anyone that could kill the leopardess ravaging their territory)

A_1 A ya anị ya nnụ okpogho iso

They would give him four hundred rods of okpogho

A_2 Ani ya igbe ọkara

Give him a box of ọkara cloth

A_3 Anị ya igbe nwei

Give him a box of shirts

(lines 6-8)

The omission of the pronoun A (they) and the auxillary ya (would) in A_2 and A_2 focusses our attention on the idea of giving (ani) which is the key to the verse. But the grammatical pattern remains the same.

A second type of serial parallelism of grammatical pattern involves a series of alternate lines, for example:

Example 66 (Amoogu, B1: Ohafia warriors volunteer for service against Nike dwarf)

A_1 Nna m Akwu wuru Abia Eteete, kwere:

My great father, who is of Abia Eteete, gave assent:

B_1 Ya si ya ano odu-ijere asui egbe gbuo onye-aka-mkpuru Liike.

He said he would sit in the nest of soldier-ants and charge guns so the Short-armed-one of Niike might be killed.

A_2 Nna m Iro Agbo wuru Okpo Ntighiri

My great father Iro Agbo, who is of Okpo Ntighiri

B_2 Ya si ya ano odu-ijere asui egbe gbuo onye-aka-mkpuru Liike.

He said he would sit in the nest of soldier-ants and charge guns so the Short-armed-one of Niike might be killed.

A_3 Nna m Awa Afaka wuru Udegbe-Ezhi-Anunu

My great father Awa Afaka, who is of Udegbe-Ezhi-Anunu

B_3 Ya si ya ano odu-ijere asui egbe gbuo onye-aka-mkpuru Liike

He said he would sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns so the Short-armed-one of Niike might be killed

A_4 Nna m Mbu Olugo wuru Ibinaji Egbenyi Uka

My great father Mbu Olugu, who is of Ibinaji Egbenyi Uka

B_4 Si ya ano odu-ijere asui egbe gbuo onye-aka-mkpuru Liike

Said he would sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns so the Short-armed-one of Niike might be killed

(lines 38-46)

This alternating pattern continues with minor variations up to line 62 of the text.

6.4.2.2. Inchoate Parallelism of Grammatical Patterns

A careful examination of Charts 5 (in Chapter 8) below will reveal that in some of the instances in which exact repetition does not occur, various themes are presented

by phrases which are formed by analogy on the same or identical syntactic form as those occuring in the variant texts. This is one type of inchoate parallelism of grammatical patterns. A more regular type involves the formulaic lines and the cases of exact repetition indicated in Charts.

6.4.3. Phonological Parallelism

Phonological parallelism is not further discussed here, as the most significant patterns are well illustrated by the recurrent patterns of syllables, tones and stresses described in sections 6.2.1. - 6.2.2. above.

6.5. VERSES AND PARAGRAPHS

One important structural consequence of the patterns of repetition and parallelism examined in the foregoing sections is that the lines of the songs occur in various groups, each of which contains a theme or motif and shows evidence of internal linking by means of various forms of vertical and cross parallelism. Discussed in this section as verses (see section 6.1 above), these constitute the secondary units of the poetic structure of the texts and combine with one another to form tertiary units discussed here (6.5.1.) as verse paragraphs on account of their resemblance to the paragraphs found in prose discourse. In these tertiary units of poetic structure are contained the main dramatic incidents (episodes) out of which the tales are built.

6.5.1. Verses

The great majority of the verses in the songs may be described as couplets in the sense that they consist of groups of two linked lines each containing a single theme. There are, however, other forms of verse comprising three, four or

more lines (quatrains, quintains, etc.). But generally-speaking, the couplets are the main types of verse in the songs, and the larger units, on examination, will be seen to constitute various combinations of couplets or of couplets with one or more elaborative lines.

6.5.1.1. Couplets

It is generally recognized that couplets are the natural consequence of parallelism and repetition (EPP: 599). Early students of Igbo verbal music have remarked on the frequent occurrence of couplets in Igbo songs, but mainly with reference to the call-and-answer type of folk song in which as Basden (1906: 362) writes "the leader sings his part and others take up the chorus". As we have noted elsewhere in this Chapter, similar couplets occur in the present Ohafia narratives, in passages exhibiting the antiphonal pattern of rhythm; but in other passages what we have are two-line structures created by the repetition or pallelism of whole lines or of elements within the lines. Since, in the foregoing we have given numerous examples of linear repetition and parallelism, this section will be confined to a description of the linking patterns which give the couplets their characteristic unity of structure.

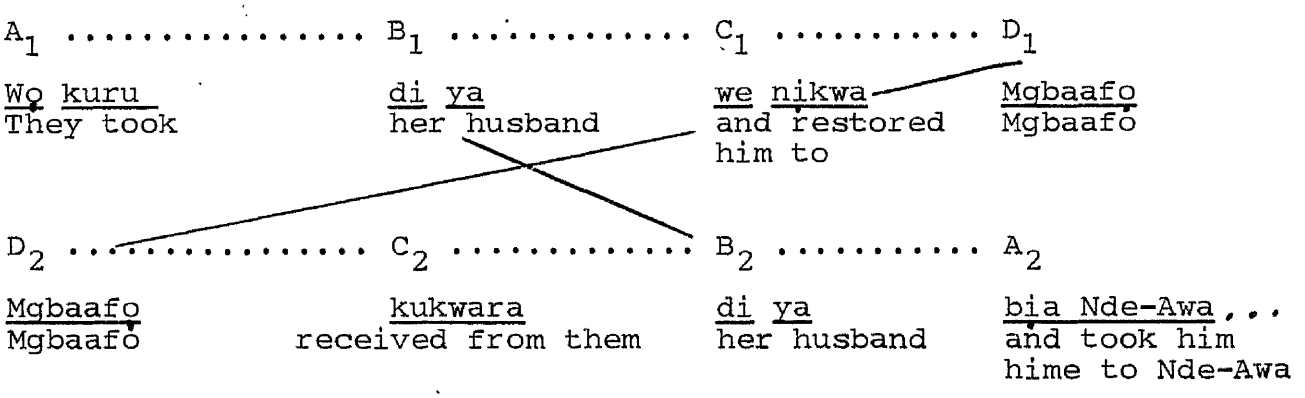
Type I: Couplets Linked by Cross Parallelism

The following varieties have been detected:

(a) Simple Diagonal Patterns: Here a diagonal line descending from right to left and vice versa will show that the last word or phrase of the second is the same as the first word or phrase of the first line and vice versa.

Simple Diagonal Pattern I: Left-Right diagonal, descending:

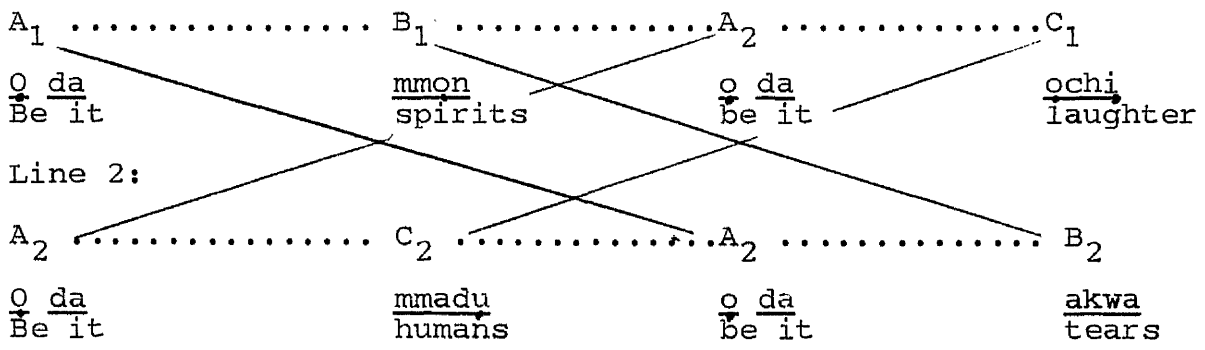
Example 70:



(Nne Mgbaafo, B1: 14-15)

A_1 A_2 and C_1 C_2 are types of semantic parallelism, complementary.

Example 71:



(Nne Mgbaafo, C1: -)

The parallelism here (B_1 B_2 and C_1 C_2) involves the pairing of the related concepts of death (denoted by 'spirits') and grief ('tears'), and of life (denoted by 'humans') and joy ('laughter').

Type 2: Couplets Linked by Vertical Parallelism

The above couplet (Example 71) is not only linked by cross parallelism but also by vertical parallelism involving the life-joy and death-grief relationships. We may view this pattern of vertical parallelism as a pairing of the main segments of the lines (A_1 A_2 and B_2 B_2):

Example 72(a):

	A	B
1	Ọ̀ dà Mmọn	ọ̀ dà ọchì
2	Ọ̀ dà mmmadù	ọ̀ dà àkwa

or as a pairing of the main verbal and nominal elements (A_1 A_2, B_1 B_2, C_1 C_2 and D_1 D_2):

Example 72 (b):

	A	B	C	D
1	Ọ̀ dà	mmọn	ọ̀ dà	ọchì
2	Ọ̀ dà	mmadù	ọ̀ dà	àkwa

In another kind of vertical linking, each of the two lines in a couplet begins and ends with the same word giving rise to a king of envelope pattern in which the whole couplet begins and ends with the same word, for example:

Example 73:

Ya fū̀ Mgbaafọ̄ Kaalū̀, di yā fụ yā
Ya sī ọnwà wù minyè ya

(Nne Mgbaafo B1: 48-49)

6.5.1.2. Tercets: Couplets with Superpository Lines

In the most common variant of this pattern, an idea is presented in a couplet and completed or explained in a third explicative line, for example:

A_1 Ibe ọrị wọ dokwe Ndukwe Emeụwa
A_2 Ibe ọrị wọ zokwe Ndukwe Emeụwa
B_1 Wọ je kutu Ndukwe

Translation: A_1 That place where they kept Ndukwe Emeuwa
A_2 That place where they hid Ndukwe Emeuwa
A_3 They went and called Ndukwe (Example 10, above)

or,

A_1 Nne Acho Ugo Ebele

A_2 Nne Acho Ugo Ebele

B_1 O bia muo umu nini iso

Translation: Great Mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele

Great Mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele

She came in her time and begat five sons

(Example 37, above)

A second type of tercet has the form $A_1B_1B_2$: here an idea is introduced in one line and elaborated on in a subsequent couplet:

A_1 Odududu ndufu

B_1 Ebughi-isi-aga-ụjọ-nu, ikoro!

B_2 Ebughi-isi-aga-ụjọ-nụ, okoro!

(Example 36 above)

Finally, we have the $A_1A_2A_3$ tercet, involving the development of a theme in three parallel lines, e.g.

Example 74:

A_1 Di ya gaa aha

A_2 O gaa aha Igbe Mmaku

A_3 Di ya agaala aha Igbe Mmkau

Translation: A_1 Her husband went to war

A_2 Her husband went to the war of Igbo Mmaku

A_3 So then, her husband went to the war of Igbe Mmaku

(Nne Mgbaafo, B1, 2-4)

6.5.1.3. Quatrains

Four-line paragraph patterns may have the form $A_1A_2B_1B_2$: here a theme is developed in two parallel couplets:

A_1 Nne Mgbaafo lea anya ezhi di ya o luoghi aluo

A_2 Nne Mgbaafo nwa nwa Dike Okwara Agwu

B_1 Nwa nde-eri-isi-anighi-eri-agba

B_2 Nwa nde-eri-isi-anighi-eri-agba

(Example 49 above)

A second type of quatrain has the form $A_1B_1B_2A_2$: an idea is introduced in the first line, developed in an intervening couplet and re-inforced in the fourth line, e.g.

A_1 Igbe Mmaku wọ sị egbule nwaamị ọhụ

B_1 Ọ zhịarị ogo mụọ chọrọ dị ya bịa

B_2 Ọ zhịarị ogo mụọ chọrọ dị ya bịa

A_2 E gbee ye egbu! (NM, B1: 44-47).

Thirdly we have see-saw quatrain comprised of two alternating parallel lines ($A_1B_1A_2B_2$). This is most commonly found in the lyrical passages, e.g.

A_1 Cheo, nde a dị mị?

B_1 Nde aha alọtaala ike!

A_2 Cheo, nde a dị mị?

B_2 Wọ sị ọ dị ọ luọ-he!

(Example 49 above)

We also find the same pattern in the main narrative passages:

Example 75:

A_1 Onye Mde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi

B_1 Ọ za Mgbaafọ Kaalu

A_2 Ọ wụ onye Eleghe Ọfọka

B_2 Dị ya aza Ndukwe Eme

(Nne Mgbaafo, B2, 2-5)

Translation:

A_1 Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi

B_1 Mgbaafo Kaalu is her name

A_2 She is a person of Eleghe Ofoka

B_2 Ndukwe Eme is her husband's name

In a fourth type of quatrain, an idea introduced in the first line is developed in three lines, in the form $A_1B_1B_2B_3$:

Example 76:

A_1 Ya si ya choje di ya Nnong Ibibie

B_1 Ma ya afughu di ya ya anigh aluo aluo

B_2 A maghi di ya-aluzi ya aluzi

B_3 O lu ya alu umunne ya.

(Nne Mgbaafo, B2, 18-21)

Translation: A_1 She said she was going to seek her husband at Nnon Ibibie

B_1 If she did not see her husband she would never again return

B_2 She knew no other man that could marry her so tenderly

B_3 He married her and married all her relatives.

Finally, we have quatrains in which an idea is developed or reiterated in three lines towards a final statement or revelation in the fourth ($A_1A_2A_3B_1$):

A_1 Onye-aka-mkpuru ekweghi alu Liike!

A_2 Onye-aka-mkpuru ekweghi alu Liike!

A_3 Onye-aka-mkpuru ekweghi alu Liike,

B_1 Ezhi afa ya wu Liiko.

(Amogu, B1)

Translation: A_1 The Short-armed one forestalled the defeat of Niike!

A_2 The Short-armed one forestalled the defeat of Niike!

A_3 The Short-armed-one that forestalled the defeat of Niike,

B_1 His proper name was Niiko.

6.5.1.4. Other Types of Verses

Beyond the quatrains, there are other verse forms such as quintains (five lines), sestets (six lines), septets (seven lines) octotets (eight lines) etc., but these are essentially permutations of couplets, tercets, quatrains etc

and elaborative lines. These are not further discussed here as they are adequately covered by what we have said above of the typical patterns of links in the basic forms.

6.5.2. Paragraphs

Let us now conclude by briefly examining some typical illustrations of the manner in which the verses are organized into paragraph structures in which themes and motifs coalesce to form episodes.

They are three typical patterns. First, we have the list-pattern or the catalogue, in which a succession of heroes engaged in the same kind of action or involved in the same situation are presented in a succession of antiphonal couplets (e.g. example 66 above). The list-pattern also occurs in invocative passages in the form of incantatory seriation of lines and/or couplets presenting a succession of heroes (see Example 14 above). The thematic material of these, however, do not coalesce into episodes, for episodes are much more than an aggregation of thematic material. A simple aggregation of the names of a series of heroes, or of the praise-names of one hero, merely conjures up a stylized picture of a heroic presence thus amounting to no more than an elaborate theme or motif. For an aggregation of themes to constitute an episode, it must add up to a unified dramatic incident with a clear beginning and an end. This quality is discernable in lines 36 to 62 of Amoogu B1 (Example 66 above). The lines mark out a paragraph signalled by the announcement in the preceeding line - that the only weapon that can kill the short-armed-one of Niike is a gun charged by a man able to sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge"twelve guns in all". In response to this challenge,

all the leading warriors come forward one after the other and offer to suffer the ordeal. This coming forward of a succession of determined, honour-loving warriors is presented in a pattern of mimetic repetition suggesting an intense and dramatic build-up of morale. It ends, in line 62, when morale reaches its zenith and the warriors confidently depart for battle.

We have a similar but antithetical list-paragraph between lines 65 and 91; but here the repeated failure of the warriors leads to desperation (lines 92 - 103).

The two list-type of paragraphs referred to above are preceeded by the less overtly stylized paragraph discussed at some length in section 6.2.2.2c above (see Example 8). As the discussion shows, this kind of paragraph embodies an episode composed of thematic verses which are not only clearly distinguishable by their distinctive thematic material but by tonal rhyme.

A third kind of paragraph is represented by single lines or verses which delineate an incident telegraphically or by allusion. In Amoogu B1, the departure of the warriors to battle after the build up of morale is indicated in 2 lines (lines 62 - 63). The action presented here is both a theme and an episode, a theme in the sense that it is a single unit of description presenting an action, an episode in the sense that - in this context - it indicates a complete incident.

The congruence here between theme and episode, hence between verse and paragraph, is somewhat comparable to the existence of one-line paragraphs in prose discourse which consist of single sentences. But it also draws attention to

an important quality of the episodic units of the narratives to which we shall pay a great deal of attention in the next Chapter on account of its pertinence to a proper understanding of the compact brevity and structural unity of the texts (see 7.2 below). This is the general absence of elaborate, digressional and dangling episodes of the kind found in monumental epic poetry and the tendency for the narratives to develop by means of allusive and strictly essential episodes organized in various mnemonic and logical patterns. Many episodes of this kind are contained in paragraphs composed of single verses and ranging in size from single lines and couplets to tercets, quatrains and the like; but they are nevertheless clearly recognizable as episodes by reason of their distinctiveness as separate dramatic incidents, albeit incidents suggested by allusion.

Apart from the monothematic episodes, other episodes in the narratives are clearly marked out in the oral performance by musical interludes and formulaic repetition.

In the text of Elibe Aja B1 given above (Example 1) we have two such instances of episode-marking musical interludes between lines 8 and 9 and 70 lines 70 and 71 respectively. These are indicated in the transcription by means of gaps. The first (between lines 8 and 9) marks out the main body of the narrative from the introductory episode providing the background of events. The second (between lines 70 and 71) marks out the main tale from what is decidedly a separate incident - the separate tale of the hero's fatal encounter with a bush-hog at Amuru (lines 71-75). This inessential episode, the distinctiveness of which is emphasized by its omission in other versions of Amoogu by the B poet, is one

of the rare cases of the occurrence of what we shall define, in the next Chapter, as dangling episodes, comprising tales-within-the-tale (see 7.2.3. below). Other instances include the relatively long episode in Amoogu C1 (lines 7 - 69) presenting the background to the encounter between the Ohafia and the Niike Dwarf, a background episode omitted in other versions of the tale by other singers; and in Nne Mgbaafo C1 (Text 32*) we have a concluding paragraph (lines 61 - 75) containing an episode which seems to be a compressed version of the tale of Inyang Olugu (Texts 22* - 26). See section 7.2. of the next Chapter for a discussion of the place of these tale-episodes in the narrative structure of the songs.

While the paragraphs containing tale-episodes and other relatively long episodes are generally (though not always) marked out clearly by musical interludes, the great majority of other polystrophic paragraphs[37] are marked out by formulaic devices and show evidence of pattern. We have a typical illustration in the sequence of episodes contained in the paragraphs between lines 9 and 53 of Elibe Aja B1. As the following Chart will show, each constituent paragraph presents one incident in a pattern of incidents each of which begins with the motif of arrival and ends with the motif of departure with an intervening pattern of ritual communion of wine and of requests for help by Aro chiefs and refusals by Ohafia chiefs:

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37. See Note 30 above.

CHART 4

THE PARAGRAPH-EPISODE STRUCTURE OF ELIBE AJA B1: 9 - 53

PARAGRAPHS (EPISODES)	VERSES (THEMES/MOTIFS)	LINES (FORMULAIC IMAGES/ SYMBOLS/ALLUSIONS)
I	1 Arrival	1-2 Aro chiefs arrive at Okagwe
	5 Ritual	9 Ritual communion of wine with request for help
	6 Response	10 Ohafia chiefs reject pleas for help
	7 Departure	11 Aro chiefs depart
II	8 Arrival	15 Arochiefs arrive at Ebem
	9 Ritual	17-18 Ritual communion of wine with request for help
	10 Utterance	19 Ohafia chiefs inquire about the purpose of Aro visit
	11 Utterance	20 Aro Chiefs state their plight with request for help
	12 Utterance	21-23 Ohafia chiefs reject request for help
	13 Departure	24 Aro chiefs depart
III	14 Arrival	25-31 Aro Chiefs arrive at Nde-Ofoali and arrive at the home of Nkuma Obiriagu
	15 Response	31 Aro Chiefs Ohafia Chiefs reject request for help
IV	16 Arrival	32-34 Aro Chiefs arrive at Ibinaji
	17 Ritual	35 Ritual Communion of wine
	18 Utterance	36-37 Ohafia chiefs inquire about the purpose of Aro visit and reject pleas for help

PARAGRAPHS (EPISODES)	VERSES (THEMES/MOTIFS)	LINES (FORMULAIC IMAGES/ SYMBOLS/ALLUSIONS)
V	19 Arrival	38-41 Aro chiefs arrive at Okon
	20 Ritual	42 Ritual communion of wine with Ohafia chiefs rejecting pleas for help
VI	21 Arrival	43-52 Aro Chiefs arrive at Asaga
	22 Success	53 Elibe Aja agrees to help

A similar recurrence of patterned paragraphs clearly marked out by formulaic lines will also be seen, for example, in Nne Mgbaafo B1*(lines 8 - 26), Nne Mgbaafo F1 (lines 56 -216) and Nne Acho Ugo B1 (lines 27 - 70).

To sum up now, the paragraphs of the songs are units of poetic structure composed of one or more verses presenting basic narrative elements (themes and motifs) which add up to the dramatic incidents - the episodic units - of which the tales are ultimately composed. Since, in this Chapter, we have dealt with the various ways in which basic images (in formulas) and formed into themes and motifs (in verses) and themes (in verses) into episodes (in paragraphs), the next Chapter will be confined to an examination of the nature of the episodes themselves as maximal narrative units and the ways in which they are combined in the creation of the tale.

CHAPTER 7

EPISODIC PATTERNS IN THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE SONGS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the last Chapter (section 6.5.2), the compact structural unity of the texts of the narrative is due to two main factors: (a) the tendency for the singers to compose by means of essential as opposed to elaborate, digressional and dangling episodes (section 7.2 below) and (b) the organization of the episodes themselves in various logical and formulaic patterns (section 7.3).

7.2. THE EPISODES

In order to fully appreciate the nature and significance of the essential episodes and their role in maintaining the structural unity of the texts, it seems necessary, first of all, to discuss the characteristic features of the other three categories of episodes:

7.2.1. Elaborate Episodes

Elaborate episodes are most commonly found in the monumental epics (e.g. the Homeric epics) and in novels. They are born of the constant need for the narrator to inform, explain and generally to bring his audience to comprehend fully the details of a forgotten past or those of an unknown imaginary world. They are not necessary in situations such as the one in which the Ohafia songs are narrated. Here, the singer and his audience are equally informed about the heroic world from which the poems draw their themes. Thus, whereas the Ohafia singers are content to indicate and allude "to things and events without direct narrative...going rapidly from critical point to point in

their survey of the fable",[1] both the epic poet and the novelist find themselves under constraint to describe and explain everything and every event in which they involve their characters, because they know that their audience have no knowledge of the background.

As a matter of fact, there is only one instance of the use of an elaborate episode in the entire corpus of Ohafia texts presented here. This occurs in Amoogu C1 (Text 40*). But even this is vestigial by the standards of the Homeric epics and the novel. It covers nearly one-sixth (lines 7-69) of this lengthy text of 364 lines and is devoted to giving us a full account of the quarrel behind the encounter between Ohafia people and the Short-armed-one of Niike. But though the incident provides some insights into the character of the Short-armed-one and helps to suggest the grounds of Ohafia's common cause against his people, it hardly advances the narrative in any significant way. This is evidenced by the elegance and poignancy achieved in the "B" texts. In these the same background is either wholly omitted or alluded to without direct narrative. Thus, in the final analysis, the effect of the elaborate foregrounding in the "C" text is simply that of retarding the narrative substantially and to some extent blurring the central issue in the narrative: the glorious emergence of a new national hero where the old heroes had failed.

7.2.2. Digressional Episodes

Digressional episodes are an important feature of the

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1. See Ker, 1908: 124.

Homeric and other monumental epics, including Milton's Paradise Lost. They are the "retarding elements" identified by Goethe and Schiller[2] in the Homeric epics and illustrated by Auerbach in Mimesis with reference to "the well-prepared and touching scene in Book 19 (of the Odyssey), when Odysseus has at last come home" and "the old housekeeper Euryclea, who had been his nurse, recognizes him by a scar on his thigh" (Auerbach, 1946: 3). As a stranger, Odysseus had won Penelope's goodwill; now at his request

> she tells the housekeeper to wash his feet, which, in all old stories, is the first duty of hospitality toward a tired traveller. Euryclea busies herself fetching water and mixing cold with hot, meanwhile speaking sadly of her absent master, who is probably of the same age as the guest, and who perhaps, like the guest is now wandering somewhere, a stranger; and she remarks how astonishingly like him the guest looks. Meanwhile Odysseus, remembering his scar moves back out of the light; he knows that, despite his effort to hide his identity, Euryclea will now recognize him, but he wants at least to keep Penelope in ignorance. No sooner has the old woman touched the scar than, in her joyous surprise, she lets Odysseus' foot drop into the basin. (Auerbach, 1946: 3).

The "retarding elements" here occur between the point at which the housekeeper recognizes the scar and the point at which she lets Odysseus' foot drop back into the basin. It involves a detailed account of the origin of the scar; a wound sustained in Odysseus' boyhood, "at a boar hunt, during the time of his visit to his grandfather Autolycus" (Auerbach, 1946: 4). Covering more than seventy lines of verse, this digressional episode is almost as long as the incident which provokes it. As Auerbach relates, the digres-

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2. Auerbach, 1946: 5.

sion "affords an opportunity to inform the reader about Autolycus, his horse, the precise degree of his kinship, his character, and, no less exhaustively than touchingly, his behaviour after the birth of his grandson; then follows the visit of Odysseus, now grown to be a youth; the exchange of greetings, the banquet with which he is welcomed, sleep and waking, the early start for the hunt, the tracking of the beast, the struggle, Odysseus' being wounded by the boar's trusk, his recovery, his return to Ithaca, his parents' anxious questions - all narrated, again with such a complete externalization of all the elements of the story and of their interconnections as to leave nothing in obscurity. Not until then does the narrator return to Penelope's chamber, not until then, the digression having run its course, does Euryclea, who had recognized the scar before the digression began, let Odysseus' foot fall back into the basin" (Auerbach, 1946: 4).

Nothing of this kind occurs in the Ohafia narratives. The only thing that looks somewhat like it is a highly compressed flashback in lines 176-182 of Amoogu C1, when all the seasoned warriors of the land had been tried and found incapable of charging the guns needed to kill the Short-armed-one of Niike. At this point one of the unsuccessful heroes - Ebi - advises his comrades to go and look for a little-known farmer, a person of the small village of Amuma, known as Amoogu. In a short anecdote, he recounts a hunting trip involving himself and the would-be hero and in which he first recognizes the latter's dexterity in a lizard-chase. But this - like the elaborate episodes referred to in Section 7.2.1. above, tells us little of real importance so far as the

development of the story is concerned. It can easily be omitted - as indeed it is in other versions of Amoogu - without destroying the integrity of the narration.

The absence of the "retarding element" or digressional episodes, in the Ohafia texts makes them somewhat like the "homogenous" narratives produced on the one hand by "the so-called Elohist" in the Old Testament and on the other by the composers of the Eddic lays of the Old Teutonic heroic tradition.[3] Auerbach illustrates the style of these "homogenous" narratives with reference to the Elohist's account of the sacrifice of Isaac in King James' version of the Bible (Genesis 22:1):

> And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said to him, Abraham! and he said, Behold, here I am! Even this opening startles us when we come to it from Homer. Where are the two speakers? We are not told. The reader, however, knows that they are normally to be found together in one place on earth, that one of them, God, in order to speak to Abraham, must come from somewhere, must enter the earthy realm from some unknown heights or depths. Whence does he come, whence does he call to Abraham? We are not told. He does not come like Zeus or Poseidon, from the Aethiopians, where he has been enjoying a sacrificial feast. Nor are we told anything of his reason for tempting Abraham so terribly. He has not, like Zeus,discussed them in set speeches with other gods gathered in council; nor have the deliberations in his own heart been presented to us; unexpected and mysterious, he enters the scene from some unknown height or depth and calls: Abraham!
> (Auerbach, 1946: 8).

The Ohafia narratives develop in much the same way: in them, "only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative" is externalized; "all else is

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3. Ibid. For descriptions of the features of the Eddic lays, see Ker, op.cit. Chapter II, and de Vries, 1963: Chapter 3.

left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between in non-existent; time and place are undefined and call for interpretation; thoughts and feelings remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most unrelieved suspense and directed towards a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity) remains mysterious and "fraught with background".[4] The episode in Amoogu B1 (Text 35*), in which deliberations over the challenge posed by the Short-armed-one of Niike are followed by the summoning of the diviner, Okoro Mkpi, may be cited again as a typical illustration of the allusiveness and homogeneity of the Ohafia narratives:

1. It dragged on thus, until a certain day.
2. Ohafia (people) gathered together at Ebiri Ezhiaku.
3. 'What shall we do that we might kill the Short-armed-one of Niike?'
4. They went and called Okoro Mkpi:
5. He lived far away at Ibinaji which is a village of Egbenyi-Uka.
6. He was a priest-diviner of Ezhi-Abaaba.
7. They asked Okoro Mkpi:
8. 'What shall we do that we might kill the Short-armed-one of Niike?'
9. 'The Short-armed-one would not allow the defeat of Niike.'
10. He ordered them to get into a nest of soldier-ants:
11. 'Soldier-ants are on the way?'
12. 'You should go and place a charm on the way!
13. 'Who among you can sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns, so the Short-armed-one of Niike might be killed -
14. Twelve guns in all.'

As in the "homogenous narrative" of the Elohist described by Auerbach (above), we are here given "only so much

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4. Auerbach, op.cit: 11-12.

of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative; all else is left in obscurity", We are told of an assembly of Ohafia people; but we are not told who the delegates are and how they are chosen, nor are we told, as in the monumental epics, how they tackle the problem stated in line 2 to arrive at the decision implied in line 3, i.e. to send for Okoro Mkpi. Nothing is said about the emissaries, the instructions with which they undertake their mission, their journey and confrontation with the priest-diviner at his home, nor are we told of the latter's preparations and his journey to answer the call. We simply see him at the point where his help is being solicited by the Ohafia people (lines 7-8). As in the confrontation between God and Abraham in the Elohist story, we are not told where the speakers are. The audience, however, knows that they would normally be assembled in the great communal square, near the Oke-Ikwan shrine, the traditional head-quarters, Elu, where such meetings usually take place.[5] But, what about the recipe for survival against their adversaries offered by the diviner? It is obscure, and needs to be explained to the outsider. It says:

11. He ordered them to get into a nest of soldier-ants:
12. 'Soldier-ants are on the way?'
13. 'They should go and place a charm on the way!
14. 'Who among you can sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns, so the Short-armed-one of Niike might be killed -
15. Twelve guns in all'.

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5. See Chapter 1, sections 1.2.1 and 1.3.2.

From their knowledge of the legend behind this heroic task, the audience would understand that the diviner is saying that, in order to kill the Short-armed-one of Niike, it is necessary for the people to produce a man of extraordinary powers of endurance who can sit (naked, in many versions of the legend) in a nest of soldier-ants and charge twelve guns (according to many versions, without wincing). From legend, they would also know that the soldier-ants spoken of here are part of the charm which the diviner asks the warriors to go and place on the way. The charm is called odu-ijere (nest of soldier-ants). This knowledge would probably prevent them from recognizing the slight muddling of the narration in lines 11-14, in which the poet gives the impression that the nest of soldier-ants, which he says is on the way (line 12) is different from the charm, which he says should be placed on the way (line 13).

The absence of any form of digression or "retarding element" in the compositions may be illustrated from any of the other texts presented. Here for example is the opening episode of Nne Mgbaafo B2 (Text 29*):

1. Young woman!
2. Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi!
3. Mgbaafo Kaalu is her name.
4. She is a person of Eleghe Ofoka.
5. Ndukwe Eme is her husband's name.
6. He got prepared to go to the war Nnong Ibibio.
7. But she said to him 'please, do not go, you know you do not understand Ibibio tongue!
8. Ibibio people will surely kill you!
9. Her husband spurned her words and went to the war of Nnong Ibibio.
10. Ibibio people caught and bound her husband!
11. And they put him away in a house.
12. And they locked him in with iron keys.

Notice the abruptness with which the theme of Ndukwe Eme's preparation to go to the wars is introduced, in line 6, no sooner than he himself is presented to us as the heroine's husband. The abruptness shatters our expectation - in view of the care taken by the singer to present Mgbaafo to us - that the action that would follow would immediately involve her. Ndukwe's decision to go to the wars provokes one of those stylized utterances - Auerbach's "fragmentary speeches" - which characterize homogenous narratives of this kind. There is no time to observe the effect of the heroine's intercession on her husband, for when the next verse is uttered he is already in the wars. How did he get away from his wife's entreaties? All we are told is that he spurned her words. What about the heroine's reactions. There is nothing on this. As for the journey to the scene of battle, he may as well have flown; but we are not told. All we hear is that he is captured and bound, but on the circumstances leading to the capture, there is stolid silence.

Even in compositions of the "C" poet, who, as we shall see in Chapter 8, tends more towards the elaborative style of an epic poet, we find the same quality of compact allusiveness, the same unrelieved suspense and non-digressional motion towards a single goal. Thus in Nne Mgbaafo C1 (Text 32*), we have:

6. Son of Eme, Ndukwe Emeuwa.
7. He saved up a good sum of money, a very good sum of money indeed, and with it he married great mother Mgbaafo and brought her home to his house.
8. They went on living together.
9. Then, the war of Isantum broke out!
10. Straightaway,that Father of mine, Ndukwe Emeuwa,

11. He found his okpome and brandished it,
12. He found his man-of-the-lineage-of-them-that-eat-two-at-a-gulp and slung it on:
13. Be it spirits or be it laughter,
14. Be it humans or be it tears,
15. He got prepared and set out for the war of Isantum.
16. Now, his comrades had all returned from the war of Isantum!
17. Now, his comrades had all returned from the war of Isantum!
18. Great mother Mgbaafo cried out aloud to her father!
19. Great mother Mgbaafo cried out aloud to her husband!
20. 'Alas, where is my husband?
21. 'Most of the warriors have returned!
22. 'Alas, where is my husband?'
23. But they told her he was on the way!
24. Great mother Mgbaafo looked out for the return of her good husband, but he did not return!
25. Great mother Mgbaafo, daughter of the son of the mother of Dike first-born son of Agwu:
26. Offspring of them that eat only heads and never eat the jaws of animals,
27. Offspring of them that eat the heads and never eat the jaws of animals
28. She went to them and took a gun -
29. Went and took a matchet.

In the next few lines, before we are told how she set out eventually, she is already being questioned by friendly people through whose villages she passes as she goes in search of her husband. At every stage of the preceding lines, we can see the total absence of any element of elaboration or digression to break the unrelieved motion towards the goal of presenting the picture of the courageous woman, who, propelled by love, risks death to search for her husband in the country of a deadly foe.

7.2.3. Dangling Episodes

While the elaborative and digressional episodes may enlighten us about the background of events or the character

of participants, the third category of episodes - the dangling episodes - are wholly decorative and inessential. They are to all intents and purposes stories within the stories in which they occur. Quite often, episodes of this kind are the cause of serious structural anomalies in epic poetry.

The only example of this kind of episode in the Ohafia texts is very similar to the last episode of the Anglo-Saxon epic, Beowulf, when the sum of its thematic and structural relationship with the preceding episodes is fully considered.[6] This is the incident at the close of Elibe Aja B1, in which after his expedition to kill the leopardess that lays waste Aro country has been successfully accomplished, the hero dies in another encounter at Amuru, where a bush-hog has been destroying crop in the farms. This episode, like the one in Beowulf in which the hero dies fighting a dragon after vanquishing Grendel and his Dam, takes the story further than its natural end. Since the story begins with the search by Aro war chiefs for a man who would help them kill the leopardess, it would be logical for the poet to sign off in lines 65-71 after Elibe Aja has killed the beast, delivered its body to his clients and returned to Ohafia. That the later episode concerning the encounter with the bush-hog is an inessential addition, dangling at the end of a fully-rounded tale is evidenced by the fact that it is omitted in many other versions of the story, e.g. Elibe Aja B3 (Text 19).

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6. For a detailed discussion of these relationships, see Azuonye, 1976a.

If the episode has any value at all, it is only in the sense that it enables the singer to rush to the moral statement at the end of the story, that "what a person does very well leads him to the land of Spirits"; but even this moral appears forced and even irrelevant in view of the main incidents presented in the main body of the narrative.

7.2.4. Essential Episodes

From the foregoing, we can now define the essential episodes as representing logical stages in the development of a homogenous narrative. They have three main characteristics: first, they cannot be omitted without destroying the intelligibility of the texts in which they occur; secondly, they tend in general to be coterminous with themes; thirdly, they follow one another in logical sequence. These characteristics are well-illustrated by Amoogu B1. In analysis, this text resolves itself into the following sections - an introductory eulogy and nine essential episodes:

Introductory eulogy (lines 1-10)

Episode 1 (lines 11-24): In a series of encounters, Ohafia warriors are beaten back and routed by the invincible Short-armed-one of Niike (13 lines).

Episode 2 (lines 25-29): Ohafia warriors gather to deliberate over the problem and decide to seek the assistance of the priest-diviner Okoro Mkpi (4 lines).

Episode 3 (30-37): Okoro Mkpi arrives and tells them that they must find a man of endurance who can sit naked in a nest of soldier-ants and charge twelve guns, implying that only such a gun can kill the Short-armed-one (7 lines).

Episode 4 (38-95): The problem is made public and all the heroes of the land come forward each resolved to suffer and endure to save the honour of his people;

Episode 5 (96-133): At last Amoogu comes forward and with great ease performs the task whereupon the Short-armed-one is killed and his followers routed and massacred (37 lines).

Episode 6 (134-143): A conspiracy to kill Amoogu is hatched among members of his age-group envious of the honours and gratitude that await him at home (9 lines).

Episode 7 (144-147): The assassination of Amoogu (4 lines).

Episode (148-179): Amoogu's mother is grief-stricken; her grief is deepened as kites and hawks from a silk-cotton tree overlooking her hut prey on her chicks; but as she beweeps the situation, the assailants of her son overhear her from where they kept watch over the village and offer to help by cutting down the tree (81 lines).

Episode 9 (180-196): While cutting down the tree the conspirators get themselves drunk. They try to hold up the falling tree so it would not crush Amoogu's mother's hut, but they themselves are crushed under it instead (16 lines).

There is no digression, no steering away in mid-course from the mainline of the story; and there is no attempt to elaborate events beyond the functional necessity of achieving clarity. Indeed some episodes here (i.e. episodes 2 and 7) are so condensed that they cover only short paragraphs of four lines each.

An analysis of the other texts presented will reveal the same kind of compact, episodic structure. For example:

(a) Elibe Aja B1

Episode 1 (lines 1-8): The country of the Aro is ravaged by a wild animal from the bush, which destroys and eats men and livestock. For a long time the Aro search in vain for a brave hunter who could eliminate the animal, promising huge rewards (8 lines).

Episodes 2 - 5 (lines 9-43). They come to Ohafia but everywhere they go (see Chart 4, Chapter 6, above), they are rebuffed by the famous warriors of the land, one of which accuses them of unscrupulous slave-dealing and questions them about the fate of Ohafia men lost in a war, which by impli-

cation, they had gone to fight for the Aro (34 lines).

Episode 6 (lines 44-54): At last the Aro come to Asaga - home of fearless warriors, who go where others fear to go - and there, they meet Elibe Aja, who offers to help them (10 lines).

Episode 7 (lines 55-58): Elibe Aja goes with the Aro and they show him the forest from which the beast raided their homes (3 lines).

Episode 8 (lines 59-70): In single combat, Elibe Aja kills the beast - a leopardess - and her cub, and delivers its body to the Aro, who ultimately adopt its skin as their royal insignia (11 lines).

Episode 9 (line 71): Afterwards, Elibe Aja returns to his native country (1 line).

Episode 10 (lines 72-76): In another encounter with a bush-hog which ravages crop in Amuru, Elibe Aja is killed when he fires at the beast from a cavern and the gun explodes (4 lines).[7]

Closing moral statement (lines 77-78): What a person does very well leads him to his death.

(b) Nne Mgbaafo B2

Introductory eulogy (1-5)

Episode 1 (lines 6-12): The heroine's husband goes to war in Ibibio country, despite her pleas that he should not go. In the first encounter, he is captured and imprisoned by the enemy. Grief-stricken, the heroine sets out in search of him (6 lines).

Episode 2 (lines 23-33): On arriving at the scene of battle, she is intercepted by the enemy and she tells them boldly she had come to look for her husband. But the enemy cynically refer her to the heap of headless bodies of men slain by them. Her husband might be lying dead there (10 lines).

Episode 3 (lines 34-38): After a long search among the headless bodies, the heroine returns to the enemy with the report that she could not trace her

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7. This is the dangling episode referred to in section 7.2.3. above.

husband there: she could recognize him by a scar on his lap (4 lines).

Episode 4 (lines 39-54): Struck by the boldness of the heroine, the enemy find her husband and give him back to her (15 lines).

Episode 5 (line 55): Mgbaafo returns to her native country with her husband (1 line).

(c) Nne Mgbaafo Cl

Introductory eulogy (lines 1-6)

Episode 1 (lines 7-8): The marriage of Ndukwe Eme to Mgbaafo and their peaceful life together (2 lines).

Episode 2 (lines 9-15): War breaks out at Isatume, and, without hesitation Ndukwe Eme goes to fight in it (6 lines).

Episode 3 (lines 16-23): Ndukwe Eme fails to return with his comrades. This throws Mgbaafo into brooding melancholy (7 lines).

Episode 4 (lines 24-29): After waiting in vain for his return, Mgbaafo takes up arms and sets out to look for her husband (5 lines).

Episode 5 (lines 30-44): On the way she is met by friendly people who try to stop her; but she cannot be stopped (14 lines).

Episode 6 (lines 45-62): She arrives at the scene of battle, and after a long search among heaps of dead bodies, she discovers her husband, hiding, alive, in one of them. But, alas, he had won no head (17 lines).

Episode 7 (lines 63-76): On their way home Nne Mgbaafo overpowers a man whom they encounter and chops off his head. She gives the head to her husband as his prize (13 lines).

7.3. LOGICAL PATTERNS OF EPISODIC ORGANIZATION

As has been pointed out at various stages in the foregoing exposition, strict adherence to essential episodes which are "directed towards a single goal", give short oral narrative poems such as the Ohafia songs far greater unity of plot than the more expansive epic poems. But, far more important in maintaining this unity, is what I have described

above as the organization of the episodes themselves in logical patterns, most of which are traditional and mnemonic. These patterns are of two types: extrinsic and intrinsic.

The extrinsic patterns include framing devices such as the envelope patterns discussed and illustrated in the last chapter (section 6.3.1). In these, as I have shown, the impression of unity is increased at every level of structure by the ending of lines and paragraphs with their own opening words or phrases, or by the ending of a whole narrative by its own opening lines or paragraphs. These patterns are not discussed further in this chapter.

While the extrinsic patterns are a matter of poetic structure involving verses or paragraphs, the intrinsic patterns are a matter of narrative structure, involving the arrangement of motifs and meanings. Two main varieties are discussed in sections 7.3.1. and 7.3.2. below. The first - distinguished as herocentric patterns and discussed in section 7.3.1. - involves the organization of episodes in relation to the necessity to define the heroic qualities of a central hero.[8] Two types of herocentric patterns are discussed. In the first, the hero is presented directly to us at the beginning of the text and, in the rest of the story, episodes are arranged as logical stages in an argument to justify the qualities attributed to the hero in the presentation; in the second, a series of episodes are arranged in such a way as to create a crisis during which the hero

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8. The term 'herocentric' is taken from Kunene, 1971: 67.

emerges as a source of salvation.

The second major variety of intrinsic pattern (discussed in section 7.3.2.) involves the arrangement of episodes in dialectal manner as a series of proportions, oppositions and resolutions, each new resolution constituting or initiating a new series of oppositions and resolutions and so on until a final resolution is reached. The stages in the pattern are analogous to the theses, antitheses and syntheses of the Hegelian model.

7.3.1. Herocentric Patterns

The two main types of herocentric patterns distinguished above may be described as direct and delayed modes of presentation.

7.3.1.1. Direct Presentation

This mode of presentation occurs in all texts in the corpus with the exception of Elibe Aja B1 and Amoogu B2. In the latter we have an amalgam of the two modes of presentation - direct and delayed.

The mode of direct presentation of heroes is based on a logic similar to that commonly found in the demonstration of geometrical theorems. Presented to us directly at the very beginning of the story, the hero looks somewhat like a proposition - a heroic character with a number of fixed attributes defined by the piling up of epithets. Thus, for example, at the opening of Inyan Olugu B1 (Text 22*), the heroine is presented as "killer that gave the honour to her husband", a "young woman of Eyen", "a great daughter, young woman of Eyen", (lines 1-4). This is no more than a proposi-

tion; the episodes that follow are narrated in a way to present a valid proof that the heroine merits the titles atrributed to her.

Quite often, as in the above example, texts in which the direct mode of presentation is used end with a repetition of the same picture of the hero presented at the beginning (see lines 24-28 of Inyan Olugu B1). The effect is similar to that of stating at the end of a geometrical proof - "that which was to be proved".

The mode of direct presentation is commonly found in oral narrative songs all over the world. It is apparently the basis of the medias res manner of narrative organization found in most epics where after the direct presentation of the central hero, we are launched "in the midst of things", and after a flash back to the cause of events the narrative developes in a linear manner much in the same way as the two texts discussed below, namely Amoogu B1 (Text 35*) and Elibe Aja B1 (Text 17*).

7.3.1.2. Delayed Presentation

More than the first half of Amoogu B1 is devoted to what amounts to a kind of suspenseful preparation for the arrival of the hero. Throughout this preparation the hero remains in obscurity while the singer's spotlight of epithets searches theme after theme after the other major participants. These are made to appear as formidable as possible - so formidable that we cannot see why they should fail to accomplish the tasks before them. Thus, when they fail - as they often do - a grave situation of tension is created which makes the immediate presentation of the

hero a dramatic necessity. In the two texts (above) in which this mode of presentation is used, the arrival of the hero is heralded by a fanfare of drums and trumpets and by eulogies similar to those found at the beginning of texts using the direct mode of presentation. In Amoogu B1 (Text 35*), the eulogy heralding the arrival of the hero involves a kind of dramatic apostrophe in which the hero insinuates himself into the drama of the moment and passionately appeals to the hero to come to the aid of his people (see lines 96-103). In Elibe Aja B1 (Text 17*), the hero's arrival is heralded by a eulogy of his birth-place as the home of many brave and fearless warriors who go where others fear to approach (see lines 44-52). This makes the hero's apparently rash decision to go and fight for the Aro as a behaviour consistent with the character of his lineage.

7.3.1.3. Herocentric Patterns and the Dramatic Unities

In general, the herocentric design of the stories ensures the maintenance of the dramatic unities of time, place and action in the narrations. Action is embodied in the character of the central hero of every story. In the direct mode of presentation, we know what kind of action to expect from the picture of the hero evoked. Once a character is presented as a hunter or a warrior, for example, the subsequent episodes will be entirely devoted to describing actions in hunting or battle-grounds as well as their natural preludes and aftermaths. There is no padding and the action - as defined - is followed relentlessly to the end without any digressions.

Naturally, the kind of action presented determines the kind of setting in which adventures will take place. It is however noteworthy that the impression of unity of place we perceive in the texts is an illusion created by the extreme stylization of the presentation of the typical scenes of the songs. There is hardly any clearly delineated scene; what we see, in the case of warlike actions, for example, is a huge morass of combat grounds - a theatre whose main features are the ogo (where warriors meet before departing to war and on their return), the war-front, usually littered with headless bodies, with broken and burning homesteads and wailing women and children; finally we have the Obu (the shrine where returned warriors deposit their head-trophies). Journeys are always from ogo to ogo. No details are presented of the direction of the movement or of any but the most essential geographical features bypassed - hills, rivers and valleys. All these are, of course, contained in epithets.

In a similar vein, time is presented in a stylized manner without any chronological details. In many cases, there is no reference to time at all, so that what we perceive is a whole historical epoch - an age of heroes - rather than any specific time in the past. But more than that, the absorbing interest of the singer and his audience in the figure of the domineering ancestor at the centre of events obviates any necessity to emphasize or even to hint at any specific historical time. Time is the age and the situations of conflict in which heroes operate.

7.3.2. The Dialectal Pattern

The dialectal pattern, as described above, is well-illustrated by the episodic structure of Amoogu B1:

Episode 1, 1st Position - Problem - Ohafia's efforts to defeat Niike thwarted by the Short-armed-one.

Episode 2, 1st Opposition - Deliberations by chieftains over the problem, leading to a decision to invite a diviner to help.

Episode 3, 1st Resolution/2nd Position - Arrival of the diviner with the answer; the answer is a new problem - "Who among you will sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns - twelve guns in all!"

Episode 4, 2nd Opposition - United effort of chieftains and warriors to meet the challenge results in general failure.

Episode 5, 2nd Resolution/3rd Position - The emergence of Amoogu and the immediate defeat of Niike/Amoogy's success stirs jealousy in the heart of his comrades.

Episode 6, 3rd Opposition - Conspiracy by Amoogy's comrades to kill him.

Episode 7, 3rd Resolution/4th Position - Assassination of Amoogu. This is a criminal breach of the bond of comradeship among members of an age-group which must be avenged.

Episode 8, 4th Opposition - The hero's mother's grief at the death of her son brings her succor from the doomed generation - they offer to cut down a silk-cotton tree from which hawks and kites prey on her chickens.

Episode 9, 4th Resolution/Final Postiion - Vengenance on the hero's assassins: the silk-cotton tree - moved by the dead hero's spirit - falls and crushes them all.

The pattern is present in all the other texts presented. It is perhaps after all not a peculiarity of the Ohafia texts but a universal characteristic of all well-constructed episodic narratives.

CHAPTER 8

TRADITION AND THE CREATIVE ROLE OF INDIVIDUAL SINGERS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

So far we have been concerned mainly with the traditional aspects of the content and form of the songs, i.e. those features of theme and structure shared in common by the entire community of contemporary singers and inherited through apprenticeship, training and contacts with other singers from preceding generations of masters. But, as has been noted at various points in the foregoing chapters, especially in Chapter 3, the singers are by no means passive traditors, transmitting as it were priorly-composed and memorized, correct versions[1] of the stories of the lives and careers of the heroic ancestors in every context and period of time in which they may find themselves performing. Contrarily, each singer is an original and individual artist with his own distinctive repertoire of tales and performance style; and as will be seen in greater detail in the next Chapter, there are well-established standards of aesthetic evaluation which demand inter alia that, while preserving the authentic elements of the heroic tradition in his performance, every good singer should express his individuality, skill and originality by rearranging his traditional material

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1. Our attention has recently been drawn by Finnegan (1977: 52-72) to the existence of priorly-composed poems in various cultures. These are memorized for exact or near-exact reproduction in various required contexts. For Finnegan, however, the memorization and reproduction of priorly-composed poems constitute a creative activity.

in response to new situations as well as creating new tales of his own on contemporary characters and events.

8.2 THE TALE-REPERTOIRES OF INDIVIDUAL SINGERS

It is difficult to ascertain the exact number of heroic tales in the Ohafia tradition as a whole, and the tales listed in Appendix II merely represent what I have been able to transcribe from recordings made in the course of my field investigations (See page 19, Preface). There is little doubt that this is only a tiny fragment of the total number of tales in existence. Every year sees the addition of various tales from the traditional stock of heroic legends, myths and fables to the repertoire of each singer, and new compositions on contemporary themes soon become common property and pass into tradition, as there is no "ownership" of songs (or copyright)[2] in the Ohafia poetic tradition.

There are some tales such as Nne Mgbaafo (Texts 27-33), Amoogu (Tests 35-41) and Egbele (Tests 42-45) which are widely known throughout Ohafia; but there are also many other tales which are confined to particular localities; and still other tales are confined to particular singers. While most singers will normally know (as one would expect) the widely current tales, it requires a great deal of effort to know tales from localities other than one's own hometown. Similar effort is also required to know the tales which are confined to particular singers. Not surprisingly, one important measure of artistic competence in the canons of Ohafia aesthetic judgement is the possession by individual singers of rich and varied tale-repertoires including tales from other singers as well as from localities other than their own (see section 9.4.2 of Chapter 9 below).

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2. On the "ownership" of songs (or copyright) in other oral traditions, see Finnegan, 1977: 178,202-5,270 & 236.

Equally important in the traditional canons of aesthetic judgement is the creative capacity of each singer to create new tales of his own on contemporary events using the traditional heroic formulas and demonstrating the continuing relevance of the ideals and mores of the heroic age in the contemporary world. But competence is not only judged in terms of the quantity and range of the tales in a singers repertoire: the quality of the tales is also often taken into account. Thus a singer who specializes in telling a few comic or tragic tales on a specific range of interesting subjects may, by reason of the special quality of his tales, command the hearing of larger, interested audiences than a more eclectic singer with a repertoire covering the entire range of subjects in the heroic tradition.

8.2.1 The Quantity and Range of Tales in Individual Repertoires

Judging by the quantity and range of tales in his repertoire, by far the most versatile of the six singers with whom we are concerned in this study, is poet B (Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon). He has a range of 54% - 18 out of the 33 tales transcribed so far, and this is far in excess of the range of all the other five singers put together. There is also variety in Poet B's repertoire. In fact, he is the only one of the six singers with tales from all the six major cycles of tales listed in Appendix II. The details are as follows: 4 out of 6 tales in the cycle of creation myths; 2 out of 2 in the cycle of migration legends; 12 out of 23 in the cycle of heroic tales; 2 out of 2 in the allegorical cycle; and 1 out of 2 in the cycle of new compositions on contemporary events. There are thus statistical data in support of the very high-rating, throughout Ohafia, of this singer's knowledge of tradition, a fact about which he leaves

no one in any doubt in his testimonies (see section 3.2.4 of Chapter 3, and sections 9.4.2 and 9.6.3 of Chapter 9).

At the other end of the pole are the low-range singers; Poet A (Okonkwo Oke of Akaanu), with a range of 6% (2 tales out of 33), Poet C (Egwu Kaalu of Asaga), with a range of 9% (3 tales); and Poet D (Ogba Kaalu of Abia), with a range of 12% (only 4 tales, in spite of his boasts in various testimonies about the richness and variety of his tale-repertoire).

In a way, the lowness of the range of Poet D is understandable. As a traditional medical practitioner, he is a very busy man and has "very little time", as he himself put it in a testimony (see 9.4.6 below) to spend on learning new songs. But he is very highly interested in singing, having been born into a family of singers. It seems on the whole that his boast of being able to sing many songs -- which he failed to do when he was invited to do so on two occasions (in June 1976 and July 1977) -- is no more than an over-confident assertion of what he truly believes that - given time and leisure - he is able to accomplish. As his testimonies show (see Section 9.5.1) he knows the stories of Nne Mgbaafo and Amoogu and can give prose redactions of these tales as well as criticize the efforts of others, notably Poet B (Kaalu Igirigiri). But rather than risk displaying the ineptness he sees in Poet B's performances, he chose in 1976 to record only the four tales he seems to know very well, and in 1977, he failed to keep our recording appointment, apparently in order to avoid the embarassment of having to repeat just these four tales once again.

The lowness of the range of Poet C is also understandable. For him, singing as an amateur demands that one should sing only what he truly likes and can sing efficiently. Thus, in an interview recorded in 1976, he said that the reason he has only three tales in his repertoire is because these were the only tales he was interested in and could understand sufficiently to attempt. This may well be true, for as will be seen from his testimonies in the next Chapter, he fully understands and eloquently articulates some of the most highly regarded aesthetic principles on which the art of the narrative war songs is based, and our references to his compositions in the foregoing Chapters show that he does not lack the art to abide by these principles in his making of the tale. The fact that he has only 3 tales to his credit is thus merely a matter of personal choice and cannot be properly regarded as a sign of incompetence.

But this is only the view of the outsider to the Ohafia tradition. In spite of the indisputable artistry of his compositions (a fact sometimes recognized by some perceptive local evaluators), Poet C is today hardly regarded by any other singer as a rival to be reckoned with and few informants (except within his hometown of Asaga) are even aware that he is able to sing. This, according to one informant (Ukiwe Maduekwe of Asaga) is because "he knows very little. What is three tales after all?"

Unlike Poets C and D, the low range indicated for Poet A, above, must not be regarded as an absolute measure of his competence. This low range is certainly at variance with the very high rating he enjoys throughout Ohafia today even though he died in 1966. The truth of the matter is that

only two of his tales have survived in tape-recordings made in 1966 by the broadcaster, Chijioke Abagwe, for Radio Nigeria in Lagos. It is said by many of his admirers that when he was alive, he possessed a far richer and more varied repertoire of tales than Kaalu Igirigiri and that in fact, all the tales sung by most singers of today were part of his repertoire. This is disputed by Poet B, for whom Poet A, inspite of his widely-acknowledged excellence, only specialized in singing the tales on Nne Mgbaafo, Amoogu and the coming of the ancestors. But this may well represent the protectionist attitude of a man who - as his testimonies suggest (see 3.2.4 above, and 9.4.2 below) - clearly wishes to be recognized by his audiences as the most competent singer that ever lived.

Intermediate between the low-range singers and the versatile Kaalu Igirigiri are two medium-range singers, namely Echeme Ogwo of Ebem (Poet E), with a range of 21% (7 tales out of 33) and Njoku Mmaju of Uduma Awoke, with a range of 33% (11 tales). These two singers, who are generally rated second to Kaalu Igirigiri (Poet B) are sometimes rated as "the best" on account of what we shall see below to be the special quality of the tales in their repertoires.

8.2.2 The Special Quality of the Tales in the Repertoires of Some Singers

Poet E (Echeme Ogwo of Ebem) does not seem to be interested in the tales of the conventional war heroes of the heroic age, and the seven tales in his repertoire are about local peasant heroes and "the way people do their work".[3] These tales are about hunters and hunting (Texts 20-21), wine-tappers and wine-tapping (Text 23), farmers and farmwork

3. See 9.4.2 below. The phrase is from the Chief Priest of the Omo-Ukwu temple, Asaga (1976).

(Texts 60 and 61), and child-care (text 62).

Unlike the conventional heroic tales, there is warm bucolic humour and ironic comedy in most of these tales of local peasants and their works. In the tale of Ukurube (Text 57), we have the ironical and comic tale of the human trickster-hero, the never-do-well boy, Ukurube, who on the death of his father is able to trick some Aro traders into exchanging expensive hot drinks from abroad and several barrels of gun-powder for just a few calabashes of palm-wine. This is a fascinating tale, reminiscent of the wily tortoise and his ways and of course cast in the same mode as the universal picaresque hero - the rogue - who thrives by stealth but is nevertheless admired for his wits.

In Nnam Oyooyo (Text 62) we have the tragic tale of a lovable blind old man who undertakes to look after small children when their mothers are away on the farms but who is carried away in a flood after a torrential rain. Although the story is a tragedy, there are moments of comedy and humour in the delicate relationships which the blind old man establishes with the young children he undertakes to look after both out of a natural love of children and for the little droppings of food from the mothers of the children. The story ends as a myth accounting for the origins of a popular song chanted by children when playing in the rain, for when Nnam Oyooyo is carried away in the flood, they go after him chanting:

Nde a Nna m Oyooyo?
Where is my great father Oyooyo?
Yo ya Oyooyo!
Yo ya Oyooyo!...

There is a similar admixture of comedy and myth in other tales in Poet E's repertoire: in the account of the origins of various farming rites in Ugo Nneobo (Text 60) and Eleke Uduma (Text 61), in the tale of Kamalu Imaga, a hunter who is able to understand the language of birds in (Text 21) and in Okpan Iko, the tale of a love affair between an Ukwa trader and an Ohafia woman which results in the conception in the forest of a man who turns a legendary hunter in a bitter reaction to the circumstances of his conception (Text 20).

Poet E is not the originator of these tales, They are known to, and have been mentioned by other singers. But so well does Poet E render them, and so closely associated with him are they, that others seem to steer clear of them as if from a claimed and well-fortified territory.

Unlike Poet E, Poet F (Njoku Mmaju of Uduma Awoke) is not confined to a special type or cycle of tales. His tales are taken from almost all the six cycles, but what marks him out from all other singers is the fact that he is a Christian. This Christian background he sometimes brings into some of his narratives as if to make them more acceptable than they would otherwise have been to the growing community of Ohafia Christians for whom the unadulterated tales of head-hunters are no more than the chimerical fancies of a totally savage and pagan society and which, on that account, ought to be rejected. Poet F thus brings certain aspects of the Christian myth of creation into his account of the origins of the world, and paints the picture of a first woman (an Eve) created out of the ribs of a first man (an Adam). See Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa (Test 1). This allusion to the myth of Adam

and Eve is however merely a way of making the tale look less pagan, and does not in any way undermine the original function of the myth as a reminder to men of their duty to hunt and kill wild animals, for this, says the tale is as ordained by God himself in the beginning.

There are other Christian elements in Poet F, for instance the image of the ringing of the angelus in what is essentially the pre-Christian heroic world of Nne Mgbaafo (see Text 33 in Appendix I: lines 56-57). But as already mentioned, these Christian colourings are only a gesture towards the singer's Christian brethren and do not in any way undermine the traditional heroic mythos of the tales.

8.3. THE PERFORMANCE OF INDIVIDUAL SINGERS

Apart from the differences in the range and quality of their repertoires of tales, another indication of the creative individuality of the Ohafia singers of tales will be found in the observable differences in their performance styles in the socio-psychological processes of oral composition. There are differences in vocalization and voice-quality, differences in the degree of rapproachment between various singers and their audiences or musical accompanists, and there are differences in the extent of the intrusion of the personality of the singer into the composition through such conventions as the use of self-eulogizing prefaces or signatures.

8.3.1 Vocalization and Voice-quality

Poet D (Ogba Kaalu of Abia) is in many ways right when he criticizes Poet E (Echeme Ogwo) of possessing a high-pitched voice (see 9.5.4 below). Poet E's voice is not a very pleasant voice and has aptly been described by a barman in the Wayside Inn in his hometown of Ebem as sounding

"like the chirping of crickets" (1977). The aptness of this simile is readily confirmed when we listen to the tape-recordings of the songs of this otherwise competent singer. From the same barman, we have a different but more complimentary description of the voice of Poet B: "it sound gam gam like a bell". Again, this is an apt ideophonic description of what, as we can discern from the tape-recordings, is the mellow, sonorous and clear tenor, a truly beautiful voice of which Poet B is justly proud (see 9.5.4 below), meeting as it does one of the cardinal aspects of the traditional evaluative standards of clarity which insists on the singer "putting things in such a way that they will be clearly audible to the listener" (ikāpùsà ife à nu ànu a ntì).

There is some similarity between the voice of Poet F and that of Poet B, but Poet F's voice is less sonorous and has the same hint of age which will be found in the bass voices of Poets A, C and D.

There are some hearers who prefer the deep, bass voice over the mellow sonorous voice, especially when it has a hint of age in it. Such a voice is highly suggestive of the gravity of the voice of a priest performing a ritual chant; but the sonorous voice is enjoyable in itself on account of its sheer musicality.

8.3.2 The Singer and his Audience

Some singers consistently address themselves directly to their audiences while others do not. Poets A, B, and E are hardly any hint to give the hearer, listening to their songs from the tapes, that a listening audience was involved in the original performance. They only address

their audiences at the end of their performances, using the conventional oratorical formula: Unu kwee woo to which they get the response woo!

In Poets C, D and F on the other hand, we are constantly reminded of the presence of a listening audience by the fact that from time to time in the course of the performance the audience is invoked to keep their attention by means of the oratorical formulas (see section 2.4.4 of Chapter 2). In Nne Mgbaafo F1, for example, Poet F invokes his audience 15 times between lines 25/26, 34/36, 54/55, 68/69, 73/74, 88/89, 107/108, 133/134, 157/158, 168/169, 232/233, 252/253, 276/277, 290/291. Similarly, in Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa F1, the audience is invoked 8 times, in lines 7-8, 34-35, 48-49, 68, 86-87, 113, 129-130, 170-171, as well as at the beginning and close of the tale.

Poet F also addresses his compositions to whomever he is performing for. Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa F1 was recorded and waxed by the firm of Nwosu Brothers and Company Aba (see 3.4.3) and as can be seen from the text (Text I, in Appendix I), the whole tale is addressed directly to this modern 'patron':

> Lines 1-3: Merciful God of Creation!
> Nwosu Brothers!
> We are here to tell the story of the creation of the world.

Similarly, in Nne Mgbaafo F1 (Text 33, in the Appendix), the singer addresses the tale directly to me ("fair-complexioned man") and seizes the opportunity to make the moral of the tale relevant to my own life:

Lines 1-6: When in the course of your life, you feel you
ought to get married, fair-complexioned man,
You are well-advised to get married to she-that-
is-her-husband's-heart, for she-that-is-her-
husband's-heart is a great asset.
You must not fail when getting married to get
married to she-that-is-her-husband's-heart,
it is a great asset,
We are here to tell the story of she-that-is-her-
husband's-heart,
Mgbaafo Kaalu,
She is a person of the patriclan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

In the end, the moral is clinched and again addressed directly to me:

Lines 301-303:

Fair-complexioned man,
That is how a young woman brought her husband home
from war,
To the head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

Apart from such complimentary direct addresses to 'patrons', singers generally address their tales in an impersonal tone of voice to the Ohafia community as a whole, but in the practice of Poet F, the presence of a non-member of the Ohafia society might necessitate explanations such as the following from Nne Mgbaafo F1 addressed to me:

Lines 7-8:

...fair-complexioned man,
Of course you know Nde-Awa, the patriclan of
Nde-Awa-Ezema.
That is Asaga, Asaga Ohafia.

And when he mentions the difference between "fighters" and "head-gatherers" (a distinction peculiar to himself), he sees the need to explain:

Lines 19-25:

As you will know, when Ohafia people went to war in those days,
When they got to the battle-ground, some people will fight and some others will not.
And when the enemy was overcome, and some fighters had won heads,
The head-gatherers would pick up the heads and gather them together in a house.
It was not the fighers that gave the heads to the head-gatherers
For them to bring home and keep in a house after they had finished fighting,
However, when the enemy was overcome, some fighters brought home the heads they had won themselves.

8.3.3 Singers and their Musical Accompanists

All singers make use of the same instrumental musical accompaniment (see section 2.4.5 above); but only Poet F makes use of the chorus-man (see also section 2.4.5 above). Poet F is also the only singer that often breaks off in the middle of the tale to sing the praises of his musicians. Thus, in Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa F1 (Text 1), the hornman is invoked twice, first in lines 88-89:

Eke Nna Emenike,
Powerful hornman!

and in lines 123-125:

Kamalu Nna Eke,

Son of Eke Ikpemini,

He that creates art with his tongue!

8.3.4 Authorial Signatures and Prefaces

There is hardly any form of authorial intrusion into the narratives of Poets A, B, C and E, but in his only recorded performances in 1976, Poet D began with a self-eulogizing prefatory remark in which he also put forward his usually articulate views on the close links between the war songs and omenali (tradition):

Ọọ mụ gị Ọgba Kaalụ. E bi m n' Amaiyi. A wụ m onye Ọhafịa. Gị sikwalụ anyị bịa meiri gị nganga. Iri ọ zhịarị Amaiyi r'Ọhafịa. Nne ji anyị Ọọ anyị nwo iri ọ a kpọ egwu-aha. (Introducing his drummer) Ọ nwa Igwe...Ọọ onye Item anyị. Akaanụ Item. Ọọ elege anyị ha nworo ya. Nne ji anyị. Anyị bịakwalụ a nganga, ime ya r'obi ụtụọ, ka amara ife mba eme. Mba nwe omenali wọ (Igwe agrees: Oo nne oo). Bekee nwo omenali wọ. Anyị gị Igbo, anyị nwe omenali anyị. Ife ọ anyị bịa agụ taa, ọọ iri anyị eji edula nwa-ike. Ma mgbe anyị na-eje aha ichin, gị gbuu aha anyị egwere ya dulaa gị. Gị gbu aha, anyị egwere ya dulaa gị. Ugbua, anigi ejekwa aha, gị gbu ulue elu, gị zụ moto, gị baa ụba, mee ife ọbụla i mee, anyị e gwere ya kelee gị. Gị azhị alị-Bekee lụa, anyị egwere ya kelee gị. Gị nwụkwalị, anyị egwere ya dulaa gị.

Mmenimeni wo!

Audience: Woo!

Omeni wo!

Audience: Woo!

Translation

I am the one called Ogbaa Kaalu. I live here in Amaiyi. But I am a native of Ohafia. You have requested us to show you a bit of our pride. The roots of this genre of iri are actually in Amaiyi in Ohafia. We are children of the same mother. We are the true owners of this genre of iri which is called egwu-aha (war music).[4] (Introducing his drummer) This is Igwe...He is a native of Akaanu Item. He belongs to a community with which we own it (war music) in common. We are children of the same mother. And so here we have come to show you a bit of our pride and to do so in all happiness, so that the whole world will see something of the most distinctive aspect of our omenali (tradition). (Igwe agrees: That is very correct). The white man has his own distinctive tradition. We Igbo people, we have our distinctive traditions. What we have come to perform today, it is a type if iri with which we bid farewell to the brave (when they die). And when we used to go to war, in the olden days, we used it to bid farewell to those who won heads in battle. We used it then to celebrate those who won heads in battle. But today that we no longer go to war, we use it to greet those who make such accomplishments as building a storeyed house, buying a car, etc. We also use it to greet those who come home with degrees from the white man's land, and also use it to celebrate them when they die.

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4. OK uses the central Igbo form egwu-ahā here because he is addressing a non-Ohafia man. Most native speakers of various Igbo dialects make such compromises when speaking to persons from other dialect-areas.

Mmenimeni wo! [5]

Audience: Woo!

Omeni wo![6]

Audience: Woo!

Poet F does not identify himself nor the function of the song in prefatory remarks of this kind. Rather, his performances are generally interspersed with short self-eulogies in which he reminds his audience of his authorial role. Thus in Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa F1 (Text 1), he breaks off after saluting his hornman to name himself:

Lines 127-128:

It is Okpo Oke son of Orieji:

I am the one putting in my voice!

and in Nne Mgbaafo F1 (Text 33), we have in lines 146-147:

Ekweke, son of Orieji, I am the one putting in my voice:

Njoku, son of Mmaju, son of Nnaji Idika Ikpe.

Other singers, including even the boastful Ogba Kaalu (Poet D) confine such signatures to the invocative war songs in their repertoires.

8.4. CREATIVE VARIATIONS IN THE TEXTS OF THE SONGS

The creative individuality of the singers is reflected in the wide range of variant texts of the same tales recorded in the field, not only from different singers but also from the same singers on various occasions and in different periods of time (see full list in Appendix II).

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5. This is OK's version of the oratorical invocation, Unu kwee woo (answer me, yes! or Attention now).
6. A contracted form of Mmenimeni (note 5 above).

For reasons of space only a few samples of these variant texts have been presented in Appendix I, but there is enough here to provide an adequate basis for a detailed study of the prevalent patterns of creative innovation in the the composition and performance of the songs and the ways in which these impinge on the need to maintain the stability and continuity of the basic tenets of the heroic tradition for which the songs exist. The five versions of the tale of Nne Mgbaafo presented (Versions A1, B1, B2, C1 and F1) will form the basis of our examination of how such variable social and aesthetic factors as poetic ancestry and upbringing, membership of a particular local or corporate social group, source of information, personal interest and sheer skill affect the way in which the telling of the same tale by one singer differs from that of another singer. (section 8.4.1) Two other aspects of creative innovation exemplified by the texts presented include the way in which "a narrator may modify his tale to the kind of audience he has on any particular occasion"[7] and the way in which he may alter "his tale much over a period of time due to such factors as failure of memory or his having heard other versions of the same tale from other narrators". These aspects of creative innovation will be studied in section 8.4.2 with reference to variant versions of four different tales by the same singer (Poet A, Kaalu Igirigiri). The tales in question are: Inyang Olugu (B1,B2), Nne Mgbaafo (B1,B2), and Ucha Aruodo (B1,B2).

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7. See Innes, 1973: 105.

8.4.1 Creative Variation in Five Versions of the Tale of Nne Mgbaafo By Four Different Singers

A careful examination of the five versions of Nne Mgbaafo in Appendix I will reveal that only one element is common to them: the fact that a woman named Nne Mgbaafo once went to search for her husband in enemy territory. This is a theme often repeated in battle songs such as those at the conclusion of versions B1 and C1 respectively. Apart from this common theme other details in the five versions vary, sometimes considerably.

The texts disagree on the origins of Nne Mgbaafo. For Poet A (a native of Akaanu on the highway to Arochukwu), Nne Mgbaafo is a native of Aro-Oke-Igbo (Arochukwu):

> A certain woman was called Nne Mgbaafo:
> She was of Aro-Oke-Igbo (lines 1-2).

But for the other three singers (B, C and F), Nne Mgbaafo is from Asaga (praise-named Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi):

> B1: Mgbaafo
> Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi (lines 1-2)
>
> B2: Young woman
> Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi,
> Mgbaafo Kaalu is her name (lines 1-3)
>
> C1: Attention now for the great Cockerel of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi,
> Great one, ikporikpo, of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi (lines 1-2)
>
> F1: Mgbaafo Kaalu,
> She is a person of the partriclan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.
> Of course you know Nde-Awa, the patriclan of Nde-Awa-Ezema:
> That is Asaga, Asaga in Ohafia (lines 5-8)

In addition to presenting Nne Mgbaafo differently as a native of Arochukwu, Poet A also disagrees from the other three singers in portraying her as possessing man-like qualities from an early age and as having been previously married and bereaved of her husband before coming to Ohafia to find a husband, after a very long search:

That Nne Mgbaafo, she behaved very much like a man.
Her husband had died at Aru-Oke-Igbo
And when Nne Mgbaafo finished mourning for her husband,
When she finished mourning for her husband,
She came out to the Ncheghe Ibom market,
She came out to the Ncheghe Ibom market, and there bought a matchet and sheated it.
And she bought a war-cap and put it on her head,
And she took some money and bought a dane-gun,
Put a sling on it,
Charged the dane-gun, and took the matchet to the stone-sharpener, sharpened and caught it in the air.
She took the war-cap and put it on her head,
She took the dane-gun and put it on her shoulder.
And she said she was going to look for a husband
(lines 4-23)

After her long-search, Nne Mgbaafo comes to Poet A's hometown of Akaanu (praise-named Anam-Elem-Ulu-Uma) and here she takes a man named Uduma to be her husband:

At last she came to Anam-Elem-Ulu-Uma, and saw a person called Uduma, great one of Akaji,
Great mother Mgbaafo declared: Here is a man called Uduma:
He should make a good husband; here is a man of Ikenga Ikom!

And they got married (lines 23-26)

For Poets B, C, and F, the husband of Nne Mgbaafo is a native of Asaga, and his name is Ndukwe Emea, not Uduma. However only Poet F attempts to give an account of the circumstances of Nne Mgbaafo's meeting with Ndukwe Emea, and this account is strikingly different from that given by Poet A and seems merely to be the singer's invention, intended to underline his insistence throughout this version of the tale on the eternal bond of love that subsists between the couple:

Her nurse when she was a baby-girl, this Nne Mgbaafo,
it was Ndukwe Emea,
They were in love with one another...
And so it was that once when the people of Ohafia
were set to go to war...
My great father Ndukwe Emea, who was now married to
Mgbaafo Kaalu,
He got prepared and went to the Nnong Ibibia war
(lines 11-18)

B2 agrees with F1 in locating the war at Nnung Ibibia (lines 1-9); but for A and C the setting is different: Atatum (in A) and Asantuma (in C).

At this stage another major point of difference emerges in the variant texts. In B, C and F, the heroine's husband merely gets lost in the war, but unlike in B and F where he is portrayed as having been held prisoner in the enemy camp before his dramatic release on the intervention of Nne Mgbaafo (B1: 31-33, B2: 12, 39-47: F1: 239-244), he is discovered in the C text hiding beneath a pile of headless bodies when Nne Mgbaafo arrives (lines 48-53).

A different picture is presented by Poet A. For this poet, the heroine's husband meets his death in the Atatum war, and the returning warriors mince no words in telling her so when she comes to enquire from them:

> And they warned her: Nne Mgbaafo, please go back home in peace for the people of Atatum have killed your husband (line 42).

The message is driven home to Mgbaafo when she goes to the clan that took the lead in the Atatum war (i.e. Ama-Achara) and requests to be taken to the place where her husband died (line 51).

While the fate of the heroine's husband is announced from the onset in Poet A, the fact that he is alive is withheld until the last minute and the hearer is led to fear the worst through Mgbaafo's declarations to the numerous people she meets on the way that she is going to meet the people of Nnung Ibibie and dare them to kill her as they had killed her husband "so that we would be reborn together in the other world and get married all over again". This makes for dramatic suspense, so that there is genuine surprise when in the denouement Ndukwe Eme emerges alive from prison.

The variant versions then contain many interesting variations in their conception of character, situation, action and location. There are also interesting variations in the management of episodes.

For Poet A, Mgbaafo's journey to the enemy territory is not an episode of sufficient interest, and so he dismisses it in just a verse of two lines:

> And they (the people of Ama-Achara) took Nne Mgbaafo and brought her to Atatum in Ibibioland.

And they said: Look at the place where your husband
came to fight and fell in death. (lines 55-56)

In B, C and F, on the other hand, the journey is regarded as vital for the purposes of creating dramatic suspense. This is most apparent in version F. Here the journey is described in several patterned paragraphs of the kind described in section 6.2.1 of Chapter 6, above, and these cover nearly two-thirds of the whole composition (lines 55-217). In these paragraphs we have a recurrent pattern of episodes of the following kind, each presenting the heroine's arrival at one locality or another, her fears for the death of Ndukwe Eme, her avowal of eternal love for him, the determination tojoin him in the other world, the sympathy of her hosts and her departure for another locality:

Then she came out to Nde Ibe Aja,
Birthplace of numerous braves,
Came to their village-square and sat down.
They asked the young woman: Why are you carrying
a gun and a matchet, what is it that has put you
in this desperate state?
She said that her husband had gone to the Nnung
Ibibie war:
He is called Ndukwe Emea, he has failed to return.
She said she was going to Nnung Ibibie. Let them
kill her as they had killed her husband,
So that they would be reborn together in the next
world and get married all over again.
They were moved to pity and they opened their gates
for her (lines 76-90)

After so many repetitions of several episodes of this kind, it becomes so established in the mind of the hearer that Ndukwe Eme is already dead that when he is found alive in the end there is a heightened sense of relief.

There are striking differences in the conception of the character of Nne Mgbaafo in the variant versions. In the version A, Nne Mgbaafo is clearly older than her husband and behaves towards him like a mother. She is in fact the person who urges him to go to battle, promising not to chide him should he fail to win a head:

> Uduma had not yet won a head in battle,
> But soon, we, Ohafia Udumeze began to make
> preparations to go to war at Atatum,
> Great mother Mgbaafo cooked a meal with ekere for
> her husband and her husband ate.
> Then she said to Uduma: You must get prepared and
> go to war:
> Be not afraid to return to me whether or not you
> win a head.
> You can always win a head in another war,
> for there are many wars yet to come.

But in version F, Nne Mgbaafo is clearly much younger than her husband, for as the text says: "Her nurse when she was a baby-girl, this Nne Mgbaafo, it was Ndukwe Emea" (line 11). It is in this situation that the everlasting love between her and her husband was fostered. Versions B and C agree with version F in this conception of the heroine as an ordinary housewife motivated by love and loyalty, and this they do within the context of romantic melodrama rather than in the form of the plain legend of a man-like female prodigy offered by Poet A.

In Version C, Mgbaafo's humanity and feminine frailty is even more emphatically stressed. We are reminded of how in the beginning her husband saved up a large sum of money - a very large sum indeed - and with it married Nne Mgbaafo and "put her in her place in the house". Then war breaks out at Asantuma and her husband goes. But even before there is good reason to despair - the warriors were still returning - she loses her confidence and self-control and beweeps the failure of her husband to return. But soon her fears and despair turn into extraordinary courage and resignation and she boldly marches to the enemy territory.

There are many other minor variations: the inclusion of the account of Mgbaafo's homeward journey in C and F and its omission in other texts, the description of the burial of Ndukwe Emea only in version A, the emphasis on the enemy's admiration of the courage of Nne Mgbaafo only in B and F, and the inclusion of a celebrative battle song (albeit related to the theme of the tale) in the main body of the narrative only in version F.

These variations no doubt involve the selection by individual singers of various themes and episodes that interest them from the general stock of traditional heroic tales freely available in the oral tradition. Although Poets A and C disagree over the fate of the heroine's husband, both make use of the same episode in which the heroine overpowers a stranger and beheads him for the purpose of honouring her humiliated husband. But while in A (in which Uduma is portrayed as dead) the victim is sacrificed on her dead husband's grave, in C (in which Ndukwe Eme is protrayed as alive), the head of the victim is handed over to her husband to take home as his

battle-trophy. This episode is clearly a take-over from the tale of Inyang Olugu - the legend of the brave warrior woman who wins four heads in battle and gives the honour to her husband (Tests 22-26). It is thus not used in the development of the tale of Nne Mgbaafo by any of the two singers - B and F - in whose repertoires, versions of the tale of Inyang Olugu occur.

Needless to say, the episodes and themes used in the compositions of each singer and the formulas by means of which he develops them, depend on who his father-in-song is, his local background and contact with other singers. A singer would normally stick to the devices acquired in the course of his training for as long as possible, but as we can see below from the discussion of variant versions of various tales by Kaalu Igirigiri, good singers generally reserve the freedom to make vital changes in theme and structure in the light of what they consider to be better insight into authentic tradition.

8.4.2 Creative Variation in Versions of the Same Tales by Kaalu Igirigiri

In 1971, Poet B (Kaalu Igirigiri) recorded a version of the tale of Nne Mgbaafo (Version B1) in which the adventure of the heroine was set at a place called Igbe Mmaku; but in the course of the year, he realized the oddity of setting the adventures in Igbo territory, and perhaps as a result of listening to other singers, such as Poet F, he decided in recording the same tale in 1972 (Version B1) to opt for the more likely setting - the territory of the age-long Ibibio enemy.

A similar change occurs in version B2 of Nne Acho Ugo (Text 65). Here, the surname of the heroine is changed from Ebele (in Version B1, Text 64 in the Appendix) to Erueghe, again, apparently in the light of better information on the true pronunciation of the name.

There are more striking variations in Inyang Olugu B1 (1971) and B2 (1972).

While the two versions present the same situation - how the heroine wins four heads for her husband - Text B2 glosses over the final episode in Text B1 in which the couple return to a public ceremony of praise-chanting in honour of the redeemed husband, but in which he loses no time in revealing to all present that the deed for which he was being showered with praises was in fact accomplished by his wife and that it was to her that any praises should go (B1, lines 28-31). Poet B may have included this scene in the earlier version of the song in order to present the heroine's loafing husband as a coward who remains true to the end to his disavowal of any pretences to heroism. But consistent though this portrayal of the man may be, it creates a serious falsification of tradition which any native Ohafia listener would detest. The question is: is it possible that the society of heroes would condone such an open confession by a man that the heads presented by him or on his behalf were cheat-heads (i.e. heads won by fraud)? The society might admire his brave wife for this extraordinary accomplishment, but it is most unlikely to let go a coward who is put forward in this way as a hero and who makes a point of embarrassing colleagues singing his praises in the way recorded in the text (lines 30-31). These considerations appear to have con-

strained the poet to gloss over the incident in his revision of the story in Text B2.

Other variations in content in Texts B1 and B2 of Inyan Olugu seem to be incidental slips of the tongue or lapses in memory. For example, there is a suggestion at the opening of version B1 that the palmfruit raid (the main action in the story) would take place in a forest at Nkalu, with whom the heroine's lineage are at loggerheads. The emphasis on the enmity between the two communities prepares us to expect confrontation with Nkalu people. But instead, the conflict turns out to be with Ibibio people. One explanation for this error is that the singer has learnt as a matter of habit to associate conflict with the Ibibio traditional enemy; thus he picks out the Ibibio asethe enemy purely out of habit. Another explanation is that the reference to the non-Ibibio as the enemy may be an intrusion from the story of Nne Mgbaafo (Text B2), in which the Ibibio people play a leading role as the alien force against which Mgbaafo defines herself as a hero. Dealing with another confrontation with the enemy involving a heroine of the same type, the singer quite unconsciously makes him out again to be the Ibibio.

8.4.3 Creative Variation and the Stability of Tradition

The variations wrought by individual singers in various performances of the same tales do not in any way destroy the stability of tradition as the Ohafia people see it. They rather revitalize it by presenting its basic tenets in a wide variety of interesting forms. Thus when Poet B was asked in 1977, to defend the changes he has made in some of the texts presented in Appendix I, he replied: O kwàhu ife olũ ohù (They are all exactly the same). And this is largely true. All the variant versions of Nne Mgbaafo

are essentially the same: how a woman boldly goes to enemy territory to search for her lost husband.

It is the wonder that endures, and resolved by the folk imagination into myth and legend, it crystallizes in the form of the stable verbal structures - the formulaic epithets and verbs of action which contain the core-images by means of which themes and episodes are built. For each song, there is one core-image or a system of core-images which sum up the myth or the legend. In Inyang Olugu, for example, the core-image is embodied in the epithet for the heroine, 'She-that-won-a-head-in-battle-and-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband'. In Elibe Aja, the core-image is that of the-wizard-of-guns-for-whom-the-gun-is-a-plaything; and not surprisingly does the hero perish while playing with the gun in the wilds of Amuru, for, as the closing moral says, what a man does very well leads him to the land of the spirits. In Egbele, the core image is "she that began the singing of war songs, and gave the art to Ohafia Udumezema". In Amoogu, on the other hand, there is a system of core-images rather than a single one. Against the sinister image of "the short-armed one of Niike" who could not be defeated and the "nest of soldier ants" in which no hero is able to sit and charge the only guns that can kill the dwarf, the courage and determination of a whole generation of heroes are defined, and the extraordinary powers of the man, Amoogu, who eventually makes possible the defeat of Niike, are del ineated. Stability is thus maintained in variant versions of various tales by the repeated use of the same or identical formulaic lines or half-lines containing the core-image of the tale, as will be seen from the comparative schematization of versions B1 and B2 of Nne Mgbaafo in Chart V below:

CHART V

COMPARATIVE SCHEMATIZATION OF VERSIONS B1 AND B2 OF THE TALE OF NNE MGBAAFO

NNE MGBAAFO (1971)	NNE MGBAAFO (1972)
1. Mgbaafo! Mgbaafo!	1. Nwata nwaami! Young woman!
2. Onye Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi. Native of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi	2. Onye Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi. Native of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi.
	3. O za Mgbaafo Kaalu. Mgbaafo Kaalu is her name.
	4. O wu onye Eleghe Ofoka. She is a person of Eleghe Ofoka.
	5. Di ya aza Ndukwe Ema. Nduke Ema is her husband's name.
3. Di ya gaa aha. Her husband went to war.	
4. O gaa aha Igbe Mmaku. He went to the war of Igbe Mmaku.	6. Ya turu aha Nnong Ibibie. He got prepared to go to the war of Nnong Ibibie.
5. Di ya agaala aha Igbe Mmaku. So then, her husband went to the war of Igbe Mmaku.	
	7. Ya si di ya goo gbee eje, go: 'nighi anu okwu Ibibie e! But she said to her husband, 'Please do not go, you know you do not understand the Ibibie tongue!'

8. Nde Ibibie egbu ge egbu!

Ibibie people will surely kill you.

9. Di ya ruhaa uka gaa aha Nnong Ibibie.

Her husband spurned her words and went to the war of Nnong Ibibie.

10. Nde Ibibie daa di ya kea!

Ibibie people caught and tied him up!

11. Wo doi ime ulue,

They carried him into a house,

12. Wo tukputo ya okpoghoro

And they locked him in with iron keys.

6. Ya ruo izu ato, di ya lua -- a luoghi...

Three weeks passes, her husband returned -- did not return...

7. Di ya aluoghi.

Her husband did not return.

13. Mgbaafo Kaalu lea di ya izu ato,

For three weeks, Mgbaafo Kaalu looked out for her husband,

14. O fughu di ya.

She did not see her husband.

15. Ya kwapua.

She burst into tears.

16. Ya dea egbe di ya turu.

She took her husband's gun and slung it on.

17. Ya daa mma di ya mea omu turu ukwu.

She took her husband's matchet and belted it with omu to her waist.

8. Mgbaafo turu di ya, ya choro di ya gajepua aha Igbe Mmaku.

And so Mgbaafo set out in search of her husband, and she sought her husband and ventured out to the war of Nnong Ibibie;

9. Mgbaafo choro di ya gajepua aha Igbe Mmaku.

And so Mgbaafo sought her husband and ventured out to the war of Nnong Ibibie.

10. Di ya aza Ndukwe Emea.

Nduke Emea is her husband's name.

11. O za Ndukwe Emea ma di ya

That husband of hers, Ndukwe Emea is his name.

12. Ya jere mbelege mbelege jeruo(...)

She walked mbelege mbelege until she arrived at (...)

13. Wo si Mgbaafo go oluo ole?

They questioned Mgbaafo, 'Where are you going?

14. Ya si ya choje di ya:

She said she was going to search for her husband:

15. Di ya wu ezhi di:

Her husband was a good husband;

16. O wu ezhi di ya luo.

It was a good husband she was married to.

17. Ma ya afughu di ya, ya arhadi ibe di ya rhadii.

If she did not see her husband, she would rather sleep wherever her husband may have slept.

18. Ya si ya choje di ya Nnong Ibibie

She said she would go search for her husband at Nnong Ibibie:

19. Ma ya afughu di ya, ya-anagh alua alua.

If she did not see her husband, she would never more return,

20. A maghi di ya-aluzi ya aluzi:

    No other husband could marry her so caringly!

21. O lu ya alu umunne ya!

    He cared for her and cared for all her relatives!

18. Ya ga-aga ogo muo.

    She went past their ogo.

19. Ya jewe mbelege mbelege biaruo Atan.

    She went mbelege mbelege, came and reached Atan.

20. Wo ju Mgbaafo gu oluo ole?

    They asked Mgbaafo, 'Where are you going?

21. Ya si ya choje ezhi di ya, Ndukwe.

    She said she was going to search for her good husband, Ndukwe.

22. O gaa aha Igbe Mmaku, O luoghi.

    He went to the war of Igbe Mmaku he has not returned.

23. Oo ya fu di ya, ya aluopuo;

    Only if she found her husband would she ever return;

24. Ma ya afughu di ya, ya arhadi,

    If she did not find her husband, she would sleep,

25. O mee nde gbuu di ya, muo egbuo ya.

    And let those that killed her husband kill her too.

22. Mgbaafo Kaalu turu Nnong Ibibie.

Mgbaafo Kaalu set out for Nnong Ibibie.

26. Ya jewe mbelege mbelege je aha Igbe Mmaku, ruta rue.

She went mbelege mbelege, went to the war of Igbe Mmaku, came and reached.

23. Ya jewe mbelege mbelege jeruo aha Nnong Ibibie e!

She went mbelege mbelege, went and reached the war of Nnong Ibibie!

24. Nde Nnong Ibibie, nde-ugbom-nta, wo gbafu ya:

Our good friends, the Nnong Ibibie People, quickly sighted her:

25. 'Nwata nwaami, i mee agi buru egbe turu mma,

'Young woman, how dare you carry a gun and wear a matchet?'

26. 'Go obia ni ogo wo?'

'What have you come to do in our ogo?'

27. Ya si, 'O wuru unu egbule di ya,

She said, 'If you have killed my husband,

28. E gbuo ya-gi, ya chosa di ya!'

Kill me too, I have come to search for my husband!

27. Igbe Mmaku wo ju ya, 'Go aza ni?'

Igbe Mmaku people, they questioned her, 'What is your name?'

28. Yà si ya aza Mgbaafo.

She said that Mgbaafo was her name.

29. Di ya aza ni?

'(And)what is your husband's name?'

29. Nde Nnong Ibibie ju ya di ya a za ni?

Nnong Ibibibie people asked her, 'What is your husband's name?'

30. Ya si o za Ndukwe Emeuwa.

She said that Ndukwe Emeuwa was his name.

30. Ya si o za Ndukwe Ema.

She said that Ndukwe Ema was his name.

31. Wo si o, O bia aha Nnong?, Ya kwere.

They questioned her, 'Did he come to the Nnong war?'; she agreed.

32. 'Go oleleri mkpughuru wo gbuu egbu:

'Go then and search among the headless bodies of those we have killed!'

33. 'Go oleleri mkpughuru wo gbuu egbu:

'Go then and search among the headless bodies of those we have killed!'

34. Nke o bia wu mkpughuru ohu ya akwagharia,

She went and turned each of those headless bodies,

35. Nke o bia wu mkpughuru ohu ya akwagharia,

She went and turned each of those headless bodies,

36. Ya si di ya anoo hu ma onye olu wo.

She said that her husband was not there at all.

37. 'Unu amaghi ya huwara di ya ama:

'Do you not know my husband bears a mark by which I can pick him out:

38. 'Mpa bu ya la apata!'

'There is a scar on his thigh!'

31. Ibe ori wo dokwe Ndukwe Emeuwa,

That place where they put away Ndukwe,

32. (...) ibe ori wo zokwe Ndukwe Emeuwa,

(...) that place where they hid away Ndukwe Emeuwa,

33. Wo je kutu Ndukwe.

They went and called Ndukwe.

40. Wo loku Ndukwe Emea.

They called out to Ndukwe Emea.

41. Ndukwe Ema ya aza.

Ndukwe Ema, he answered.

34. 'Go oluo onye?'

'Who are you married to?'

35. 'Go oluo onye?'

'Who are you married to?'

36. 'Minye go azani?'

'What is the name of your wife?'

37. Ya si, 'O za Mgbaafo!'

He said, 'Mgbaafo is her name!'

38. 'Go aza gini?'

'And you, what is your name?'

39. Ya si ya aza Ndukwe.

He said that Ndukwe was his name.

40. 'Minye go achorola go bia:

'Your wife has come in search of you:

41. 'Go bia je fu minye go!'

'Come out and go meet your wife!'

42. 'Minye go azhiala ogo unuo choro go bia!'

'Your wife has come all the way from your ogo in search of you!'

43. Ya si, 'Unuo ji agbu kea ya okpa,

He said, 'You have tied my feet with ropes,

44. 'Ma atopurunu ya agbu onwa ya eje fu si oo minye ya!

'If only you will undo these ropes, I will come and see if she is indeed my wife!'

45. 'Atopu ya agbu ya jee fu si oo minye ya!"

'Undo these ropes, let me go and see if she is indeed my wife!'

46. Wo daa ya agbu toa.

They unbound him from the ropes.

47. Wo kuru ya pusa ife ogo.

They brought him out to the light of the ogo.

48. Ya fu Mgbaafo, di ya fu ya.

He saw Mgbaafo, her husband saw her.

49. Ya si onwa wu miye ya!

He declared, 'This is indeed my wife!'

50. Nde Nnong Ibibie, wo gbaa ikpu:

Nnong Ibibie people, they whispered among themselves!

42. Nde ohu, nde-ugbom-nta --

Those people, our good friends --

43. Igbe Mmaku si e gbule nwaami ohu:

Igbe Mmaku agreed that that woman should not be killed:

44. (...)
(...)

45. 'O zhiari ogo muo choro di ya bia,

'She has come all the way from their ogo in search of her husband,

46. 'O zhiari ogo muo choro di ya bia.

'She has come all the way
from their ogo in search of
her husband,'

47. 'E gbee ye egbu!'

'Let her not be killed!'

48. Wo kuru di ya we nikwa Mgbaafo.

They took her husband and gave
him to Mgbaafo Kaalu.

49. Mgbaafo kukwara di ya bia
Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi, weisa.

And so Mgbaafo took her husband
in her arms and brought him
back to Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi.

50. Nwata nwaami achowa di ya,
Yea di!

51. Nwata nwaami achowa di ya
Yaa iya!

52. Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,
Yaa di!

53. Nwaata Nwaami achowa di ya,
Yaa iya!

54. Nwaata Nwaami achowa di ya,
Yaa iya!

51. E gwere Ndukwe Emea ni Mgbaafo Kaalu.

They took Ndukwe Emea and gave him
to Mgbaafo Kaalu.

52. 'Go okuru lajekwa ogo unuo --'

'Take him and return to your ogo --'

53. 'Ife merenu go onwere obi ike zhiari
ogo unuo choro di go bia,

'Whatever gave you so strong a heart
to come all the way from your ogo
in search of your husband!'

54. 'Ike di gi adi!'

'You are truly full of valour!'

55. Ya kukwara di ya ohu bia ulue wei.

And so she took her husband in her
arms and brought him back to their
house.

PART III

RECEPTION AND EVALUATION

CHAPTER 9

AUDIENCE RESPONSES AND THE TRADITIONAL STANDARDS OF EVALUATION

9.1. INTRODUCTION

During the past few years there has been a rapid growth of scholarly interest in the investigation of the aesthetic and other principles underlying the composition, performance and public appreciation of the arts in traditional African societies (see Macebuh 1974, Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike 1974, d'Azevedo et al 1975, and Andrzejewski and Innes 1975). With the discovery that the artist in traditional societies is more often, than was usually assumed in anthropological and folklore studies, an original and individual artist, scholars have found the need not only to study his creative role (as we have done in the last Chapter) but also to understand the tastes of the members of the society to whom he addresses his work. To understand the tastes of the members of a society in which traditional literature flourishes is to understand the aesthetic standards and expectations which the artist in his works aspires to measure up to or even to transcend, for as Parry has noted in his well-known study of the traditional epithet in Homer:

> The literature of every country and every time is understood as it ought to be only by the author and his contemporaries. Between him and them there exists a common stock of experiences which enables the author to mention an object or to express an idea with the certainty that his audience will imagine the same object or will grasp the subtleties of his idea. One aspect of the author's genius is his taking into account at every point the ideas and information of those to whom he is addressing his work. The task, therefore, of one who lives in another age and wants to appreciate the work correctly, consists precisely in rediscovering the varied

> information and complexes of ideas which the author assumed to be the natural property of his audience (1928: 1).

The need for this kind of rediscovery lies behind the growing interest among students of African oral literature in the investigation of audience responses to various genres of literary compositions and their actual performance as well as the criteria on which these responses are based. Thus, Andrzejewski and Innes write in their 'Reflections on African Oral Literature' (1975: 48-49):

> It seems likely that one main aspect of African oral literature with which linguists will be concerned will be that of evaluation, and here is meant not evaluation by foreign scholars, but evaluation by the people themselves of their own oral literature. Of course, evaluation is implicit in the survival of certain tales etc; presumably those items which are approved are handed down from generation to generation and others which are less well regarded cease to be told and are lost. Apart from this, there are two other aspects of evaluation which concern us: the first has to do with the ranking by the people of the various genres of oral literature // which they have....This second, and more interesting, kind of evaluation is that which judges one telling of a tale as better than another, or one narrator as more skilled than another.

So far, this pragmatic and systematic mode of investigation has not been undertaken in the study of any tradition of African oral literature; it has however been done to a certain degree in the study of the musical and visual arts in a collection of papers edited by d'Azevedo (1975). In the field of oral literature, what we have had up until the present time consists of nothing more than a set of assumptions and speculations not backed up by empirical data in the form of the recorded testimonies of local connoisseurs, artists and ordinary members of their society. The result of this has been generally disappointing, and the overall impression

conveyed is that there is something unique in the literary tastes of the African and that this is represented by certain canons of aesthetic judgement unique to the African and reflected in their purest form in aspects of the form, style and tenor of the oral traditional literatures of various African societies. Especially tenacious in advancing this rather curious theory of the uniqueness of the aesthetic canons of African literature is a series of nationalist articles published by Chinweizu, Jemie and Madubuike in Okike Magazine, in 1974 and 1975, under the title, 'Towards the Decolonization of African Literature'.

Evidence gathered in the course of my field investigations at Ohafia does not reveal any such unique aesthetic system. What we have are rather reaffirmations of the perennial view of literature as a source of moral and social edification as well as a source of pleasure. But these reaffirmations have been made by means of local imagery and with close reference to various facets of the historical and cultural milieu of the narrative war songs in a manner that confirms and extends our observations in the previous chapters on the relationship between their content and form and their social function. An analysis of recurrent words and phrases in the testimonies of a large and fairly representative selection of informants,[1] including singers, local connoisseurs and ordinary members of the Ohafia society, reveals four well-defined standards of evaluation.

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1. These testimonies are quoted in the following sections of this Chapter in English translation, but the original Igbo for various key words and phrases are given in the text. For the full Igbo texts, see my Criteria of Literary Evaluation in a Traditional Igbo Community: The Ohafia Igbo and Their Heroic Narrative Poetry (1979). In this work, the testimonies are organized in five sections corresponding to sections 9.2 - 9.6 of the present Chapter.

The first of these may be described as the standard of functionality. By this standard, the Ohafia people evaluate the songs purely in terms of their manifest effects on culture and society and on the behaviour of individuals exposed to them. On one level, this standard refers merely to the practical utility of the songs, especially their performance in association with the war dance and music as a means of enlivening various ceremonies and rituals. On another level, it refers to the documentary and affective roles of the songs: (a) as a record of the lives and careers of great ancestors and of various landmarks in the history of the community; and (b) as a source of enlightenment and edification, in response to which contemporary generations draw the inspiration to rise up to the challenges of their own age in much the same way as great ancestors rose up to the challenges of their more difficult times, in the heroic age (see 9.3 below).

The second standard of evaluation is related to the first. This may be described as the standard of authenticity. In order to effectively fulfil the traditional social roles assigned to them, it is important that the content of the songs should be in conformity with the cherished values and beliefs of those to whom they are addressed. With this in mind, various informants refer to what they expect to hear from the songs as eziokwū (truth) and ife mee ème (things that actually happened, or reality). Thus in many testimonies we hear such phrases as ife mee ème m̀gbè ì̀chiǹ (things that actually happened in the days of the ancestors). But as we shall see in our discussion of the standard of authenticity (in section 9.4 below), this is not so much a demand for the authentic facts of history as for the reaffirmation of popular

myths and legend and of traditional ethical and moral values (e.g. through parabolic tales such as Nne Acho Ugo, etc.). Quite often too, the emphasis is on local colour - "things that actually happen in this land" (ife mee àlì ò): "the way people do their work" (ǹnè eji na-àrhu orhũ) - or on those complementary references to ancestors which various individuals and communities identify with themselves.

The third standard of evaluation may be described as the standard of clarity (section 9.5 below). This is perhaps the most important standard so far as the orality of the songs is concerned. Best expressed by the phrase, imezikwa ka odoo nke oma (putting things in such a way that they would be clearly perceptible to everyone), this standard applies to various facets of the form, content, language and vocal presentation of the songs. It pays particular attention to such important attributes of oral art as audibility and the proper modulation of voice pitch. Thus, one singer may be preferred to others because "he articulates his words in such a way that they are clearly audible" (o nà-àkapùsa ife ànu ànu a ntì).

The last but by no means the least important of the four standards may be described as the standard of creative variation (see section 9.6 below). In invoking this standard, many informants use the word mgbanwò (change or variation) to refer to the need for singers to possess large repertoires of tales, episodes, themes and formulas so as to be able to entertain their audiences with a wide assortment of tales including recreated versions of the traditional heroic tales as well as new tales of their own making.

Before we proceed to a fuller discussion of these four

standards of evaluation, it may be useful to give a brief outline of (a) the kind of circumstances in which they were made; (b) the social backgrounds, roles and statuses of the evaluators and their depth of insight; and (c) the procedure adopted in eliciting the testimonies containing these evaluations in the field.[2] These may be properly discussed under the general heading, 'Audience Responses'.

9.2. AUDIENCE RESPONSES

In any performance of the narrative war songs, it is easy to distinguish among the singer's audience individuals of various age-grades, both males and females, representing all sections of the Ohafia community, in at least the village-group in which the singer happens to be performing. This is to be expected, in view of the fact that the songs - as we have noted at various points in the preceding chapters - constitute the most important form of artistic, musical and literary entertainment in the cultural life of the society.

But while the singers' audiences represent all sections of the community, they are made up (as is usually the case with the audiences of all popular nationalist literatures), of people whose responses to the compositions reflect varying depth of critical sensibility. At one end of the pole are the critics while at the other end are the appreciators.

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2. In urging this kind of investigation, Andrzejewski and Innes (1975:10) have cautioned that "to be of any value, it would have to take into account a whole range of variables, including such social factors as age, sex, occupation, status, membership of an ethnic sub-group, etc." As indicated in section 9.2 below, these variables were fully taken into account in the field investigation.

Thompson, to whom we owe these distinctions as they pertain to the evaluation of the arts in a traditional African society, defines the roles of the critic and the appreciator as follows:

> Appreciators identify with a work of art; in their vision only the physical facts are in sharp focus, while the aesthetic facets are blurred... Critics both identify (richly reflecting cultural pre-occupations) and criticize (on the basis of relative formal elegance)...(1975:23)

The great majority of informants interviewed at Ohafia seemed clearly to belong to the rank of appreciators while the very few critics encountered belong to the rank of the singers themselves and other traditional artists.

9.2.1 The Responses of the Appreciators in the Singers Audience

Hardly any peasant villager interviewed in the field appeared willing or even disposed to delve into matters of "relative formal elegance". They declared their enjoyment and acceptance of what their favourite singers sang with the total submission of the kind found among the readership of best-selling thrillers in literate cultures. As the performance proceeded, one could hear them shouting: "it is very interesting", "it is very sweet", "I like it very much", "it is good", "Yes! Yes!", "That is what actually happened!", "So this is how it happened?", "Go ahead!", "This is very true", and so on. But when disappointed they responded with wry faces, sighs, mass exeunt, silence, or shouts of: "He is spoiling it", "that is not the proper voice", "who is this man?", "I wish Okonkwo were still alive", and so on. Beyond these, any attempt to bring the ordinary villager to say more only provoked: (a) lengthy statements on the various ways in which ceremonies are enlivened by performances, (b) reflections on the affective powers of

singers who have passed into legend, and (c) patriotic and sometimes chauvinistic declarations of the superiority of Ohafia singers and songs to those of neighbouring Cross River Igbo groups.

The following interview with Mrs. Echeme Ogwo of Ebem (wife of poet E) shows the difficulty of bringing a mere appreciator to specify her standards:

Q. Do you understand what Echeme Ogwo says in his compositions?
A. (Instantly) I find it very enjoyable (laughing), I am sure that if you ever hear him perform, you will give whatever you have in your hand (laughter).
Q. Is that so?
A. The things he says are very enjoyable.
Q. Can you tell me why you say they are enjoyable?
A. They are enjoyable when he relates them in a proper manner.
Q. In what manner?
A. If he relates them in a proper manner.
Q. In what manner?
A. Yes, that is why I find them enjoyable.
Q. You were saying something of his relating them in a proper manner? Can you tell me what you mean by that?
A. You mean what I mean by a proper manner?
Q. Yes.
A. There is nothing I do not mean by that (or: by that I mean everything).
Q. What?
A. When I speak of a proper manner, I mean everything. The point is this: when a person is doing something and I see it is not good, I say that it is not good. If someone comes and asks you if something you have seen is good or bad, I am sure you can tell him exactly what you saw with your eyes.
Q. But that has not explained to me what exactly you find proper in his compositions?
A. You mean I should specify it?
Q. Yes, the particular things which you find interesting when you hear them.
A. (laughing) I cannot. It cannot be specified.
Q. Is that so?
A. O yes. You will have to wait to hear him say these things, then you yourself will be able to perceive them.
Q. I am not asking you to repeat these things as he says them.
Field Assistant: What is it in the songs that gladdens your heart when you hear it?
A. There is nothing in it that I do not find interesting. When you hear him sing, you will yourself also see that you find it all interesting.

The point of course is that Mrs. Echeme Ogwo, like other Ohafia people, enjoys the songs in their wholeness, not in their fragmented parts. Nor does she see the need for accounting in a specific manner for a kind of pleasure which is sensual and emotional rather than intellective. At times, her responses bordered on surprise at trying so indefatigably to extract a rationale for the appreciation of something that is entirely beautiful:

> MRS. ECHEME OGWO: You will soon get to know the the qualities that make it interesting. I say, to know the qualities that make it interesting. You will soon get to know it.
> Field Asst. But how can we get to know it if you do not tell us what it is?
> A. Ah! (surprised) You mean I should specify it - the qualities that I find interesting in them? Ah! But, from where did you people come? Have you ever heard it performed? Have you ever heard it performed anywhere?
> Q. Yes.
> A. Didn't you find it interesting?
> Q. But is it the same thing you find interesting in it that we find interesting?
> A. Yes of course.
> Q. I don't think so.
> A. It is!
> Q. I don't think so.
> A. It is!!
> Q. I believe we find it interesting for different reasons.
> A. It all amounts to the same thing.

She was perhaps right. We asked the wrong questions. But the answers are significant. The aesthetic pleasure derived from poetry is the same all over the world no matter how we account for it. Nor can it be specified by a person involved only as an appreciative listener.

The only dividing line between the perceptions of the ordinary village-dwelling peasant and the detribalized urban elite is that while the former at least bases his enjoyment on the fact that he knows the stories sung by the poet,

the latter quite often knows nothing about the stories and merely responds to what one traditional authority,[3] (Kaalu Olugu of Eziafo) has described as the "outward vibrations" of the performances as opposed to "the bone within the thing itself". Nevertheless, one can see behind these outward responses something of an inbuilt cultural reflex, a sense of identification with the culture of one's own native society. This kind of response is no different from the wider cultural nationalism among African writers today manifest in such neo-traditionalist philosophies as negritude (see Azuonye, 1964).

9.2.2. The Responses of Singers, Artists and the Traditional Authorities

The only category of appreciators whose responses contain profound reflections on the function of the songs are the traditional authorities (chiefs, priests, elders and other members of the communal establishments). Occasionally, from these, we get flashes of incisive criticism, as in the distinction made by Kaalu Olugu between "outward vibrations" and "the essence", in the following testimony on the art of Echeme Ogwo (Poet E):

> Echeme is the best. Even if you come to Eziafo, you see many of them, who by vibration you might think that they do better than Echeme. But they don't do better than Echeme.
>
> Vibration? That is when they begin to sing, you think that they are doing the real job. They are not doing the real job than Echeme. But if you listen to what they do it never sounds proper. But if you want to know the bone within the thing, you will find it in Echeme.
>
> (Except for "vibration", only the underlined words were spoken in Igbo; the rest were spoken in English).

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3. See 9.9.9., below, for the sense in which the term 'traditional authority' is used here.

It is interesting, in this respect, to note that it is from a traditional authority (the present Chief of Asaga) that the only specific cross-cultural appraisal of the songs, in relation to the images of heroes preserved in the omo-ukwu shrine, was recorded:

> I think you have just been to the antiquities shrines. Those carved images were carved to depict the times. You'd see quite a number of things there: the founder's wives, soldiers, his children, some criminals among them, who were interdicted by the state, the king himself and so on. If you examine them closely, you'd find such people there. That is one way of preserving the culture of the people. And when they begin to sing it out, you will remember what actually happened (spoken in English).

But apart from this, traditional authorities tell us no more than the "things which the songs do for Ohafia", in most cases picking out just those features of the songs in which they themselves have a vested interest. For instance, in another testimony, the Chief quoted above pays particular attention to the fact that his own ancestor - "the last ruling chief of Asaga" - is mentioned in the composition remembered by him:

> When people begin to sing in praise of the founder, they talk of this and that and then after that, they begin to talk of those who came after him right up to the present...Even the last ruling paramount chief is mentioned (spoken in English).

As already mentioned, the true critics in the Ohafia tradition belong to the rank of singers themselves and other traditional artists. This is perhaps not surprising. In the first place, all the traditional arts are bound by the same aesthetic principles, which as we shall see presently, emphasize functionality, authenticity, clarity and variation. Thus artists other than poets can bring insights from their own practice

and apply them in their discussion of songs. Secondly, the actual performance of songs involves the sister arts of music and dance. Musicians in particular provide important insights in the definition of the right kind of voice needed for effective vocalization and in the explanation of the role of music (drumming, trumpeting and the beating of sticks) as aide-memoires and elements of colour in compositions. When we turn to the singers themselves, we find that their insights derive from their long period of training, the period during which they master the principles by which they will eventually be judged. As keen students of their society, they are naturally most able to articulate those standards which underly audience responses. Thus, while their judgements, as we shall see, are sometimes vitiated by their excessive boastfulness, intolerance and feeling of hostility, they ultimately represent the true voice of tradition.

9.2.3. Field Investigation of Audience Responses

Because of the depth of insight provided by the singers, I devoted more time to them than to the other three categories of informants in the course of my field investigations. In most cases I interviewed them in three stages, either in one or several sittings. In the first stage, the singer was led on to reflect on his own background and training, on the kind of admonitions he received from his master or masters, on his own career and methods and on his own successes, development and present state of maturity.

The second stage led the singer to reflect on the works of other singers, both past and present. He was encouraged to speak of particular compositions, to offer sober criticism and to give vent to animosities. Finally, the singer was given the chance to defend his works against criticism recorded from other singers and informants.

For other categories of informants, one interview was usually sufficient to obtain their reactions. But in these cases, formal interviews were preceded by direct observation of their responses as spectators during performances. These observations were followed by informal conversations in which every effort was made not to draw the attention of the informants to the fact that their tastes were being evaluated.

All in all, the questions put to the informants in the field were framed to cover four aspects of evaluation: the merits of individual singers vis-a-vis their predecessors and contemporaries; the quality of particular compositions or actual performances remembered by the informant or played back on the tape-recorder for his comment; the songs as a literary genre in relation to other genres of Ohafia poetry; the songs as a culturally-distinct body of poetry in contradistinction to other traditions of Cross River Igbo heroic poetry.

Questions pertaining to the last two aspects served as a check against those obtained in response to the first two. To compare singers and their compositions often provoked

ethnocentric and personal judgements based on the evaluator's deferrence to facts of his village of origin or personal knowledge or liking of a particular member of the singer's troupe. But when reflecting on the songs as a literary genre viv-a-vis other genres, or as a communal heritage of literature viv-a-vis the literary heritage of other groups, most informants did their best to rise above ethnocentric and personal considerations and speak for the tradition as a whole.

Now to take a closer look at the four cardinal standards of evaluation recorded in the field and outlined in section 9.1 above, it will be noticed that they fall into two broad categories. The first, represented by the standard of functionality and some aspects of the standard of authenticity, refers to the dynamic social roles of the songs, while the second, represented by the standards of clarity, creative variation as well as some aspects of the standard of authenticity, refers to the various facets of the aesthetic means by which the songs are best able to fulfil their dynamic social roles. It is through the combination of these functional and aesthetic facets that the songs and their actual performance exhibit those psychologically perceptible but somewhat indefinable qualities which appreciators and critics alike describe by such terms as truth (eziokwū), reality (ife mee eme), pleasure and propriety (idī mmā), and general acceptability (ife mmadu dum ya-ekwere).

9.3. THE STANDARD OF FUNCTIONALITY

Three main aspects of this standard have been identified. The first emphasizes ceremonial utility while the second and the third

emphasize traditionality (the songs as a record of tradition) and affectivity (the songs as a source of inspiration, enlightenment and moral edification).

9.3.1. Ceremonial Utility

Outside its established ceremonial contexts, heroic poetry has little practical value to many people in Ohafia today. The natural contexts are just those events and ceremonies in which the traditional ideas of personal success need to be celebrated: funerals; festivals in the honour of ancestors; the celebration of achievements in education, business and politics; age-promotion rites; and initiations into secret societies. It is important to add grandeur to such occasions by implicitly comparing the contemporary hero with his forebears and also expressly singing his own praises. For these reasons, many attempts to account for the wide appeal of the songs include long catalogues of occasions on which they are demanded. Here, for example, is the testimony of Kaalu igirigiri of Okon (poet B):

> Let me tell you why people like it very much. It is our custom that when a person dies these songs should be performed to honour him, to bid him farewell. It is usually performed all through the funeral until the person is buried. That is why people like it very much. In the event of a ceremony, for example, if your father dies and you feel, after a while, that he should be given a befitting burial, you would normally come to us and we would perform for you and make it truly interesting. When other people see how interesting it is, they will say: Come and perform for us, come and perform for us - this is truly interesting. That is why people like it very much. When we put up the ceremony known as igbā-èkpè, various age-groups usually come to us, the particular age-group performing the ceremony would invite us to

> sing for them, and we would sing for them. In the whole of Ohafia, it is the only form of iri which Ohafia people find very interesting, the one which everyone in Ohafia confesses that he appreciates. It is the only form of iri which whenever it is performed, people gather to witness it.

Performances of this kind not only add grandeur to the occasion, they serve to bring out its significance, to establish the relationship between the ritual or celebration and the old heroic values (see section 10.1 below).

9.3.2. Inspiration

Ohafia people believe that public performances of the types referred to above cannot fail to move their audiences to emulation. The songs do this by awakening dreams of success in people. As Ogba Kaalu of Abia tells us:

> Whenever this particular type of iri is performed, our hearts brim with joy: because it is the umbilical cord with which we were born. Whenever we hear its rhythm, our hearts swell with joy; we think of the day of our birth and cherish the day of our death; we think of the day we shall raise our heads in pride and rejoice in anticipation of the day we shall grow rich... So, then, we are most happy to see it performed every time.

Elsewhere the same critic speaks specifically of inspiration. the power of the songs to appeal to just those qualities of the spirit generally associated with the rise of Ohafia to power and greatness:

> It is the thing that made us a powerful nation. It is in our blood. It does not matter whether your two arms and legs are paralysed, nor does it matter if you are crippled and sitting impotent on the ground, but the moment you hear its rhythm, it will surely revive your spirit. The point is that it is bound up with everything we seek, everything we desire in this world. It is an answer to all our needs.

The retired Presbyterian pastor, Ukiwe Maduekwe of Asaga, agrees. In his own testimony, he stresses the affective role of the songs in awakening, especially in the youth, "that old spirit of bravery":

> It awakens your spirit. That is what it awakens in the people of Ohafia and Abam. That is what it awakens in them. It awakens "that old spirit of bravery" in them (spoken in English).

Later, in the same testimony, Maduekwe, points to a specific modern situation - namely the Biafran war - in which inspiration from the songs was quickly translated into action:

> It inspires in them that old bravery. And during this late - yesterday-Biafra war, most of these - they resorted back to this old war song. When it was sung, well, young men from this area or from Abam were inspired. Of course now that head-hunting age is passed, it still remains in them, marks them out as the old, ancient warriors in which their fathers grew up and brought them. Whenever an Ohafia man or Abam boy hears this song, he knows that's the old thing from their ancient fathers. They appreciate it although that spirit of head-hunting is gone away. They appreciate it. It marks them out from other Igbo people (spoken in English).

It is an acknowledgement of the power of the songs to inspire in the ways outlined above that every singer in Ohafia is generally eugolized, as we noted in section 3.2.2. above as ọ̀kpate-ndi-ìkọ̀m (he that awakens the young).

9.3.3. Enlightenment

But while the affective notion of "inspiration" is generally expressed, as we have seen above, by the phrase, "spiritual awakening" (ikpāte mmuō) another aspect of affectivity - enlightenment - is expressed by the phrases:

inyē echìchè (intellectual awakening or putting into thought) and ikpāte n'ura (lit. awakening from sleep). In the latter part of his testimony, Maduekwe of Asaga describes the nature of the "intellectual awakening" conduced by the songs and the way in which a good singer can provoke thoughtless generousity in over-excited appreciators:

> He will put you into deep thought about what your great great grandfather was, about your own father, about your father's mother, about the life of your own mother. He will go on and on talking, talking until he wakes you yourself from your sleep. Perhaps he will tell you what your father was. As he talks about these things, you will not know when you give him whatever you have in hand. If you have a goat in hand, anything you have in hand, you will give it to him. It awakens your spirit (spoken in English).

It is not only the revelation of hidden facts of family history that inspires; more than that, it is the revelation of facts about the origins and foundation of the village itself, a fact usually hidden away from many, since the Igbo in general tend to treat "history" as a secret. Thus, the singer quite often plays the role of the revealer of secrets, usually of the secrets of other people's history. Ogba Kaalu of Abia boasts in many parts of his testimony of the effects of his revelations on his audience, at Akara, where he lives and practices homeopathic medicine. There is the excited delight and surprise of the populace for whom the information is new:

> There are many people in this village who know nothing about the person who founded it. There are many people in this village who did not know about their founding father until the day I made

> it the subject of poetry and eulogized them... Afterwards many turned round and wondered who told me these things.

But while the masses are delighted by such revelations, the traditional authorities who hide it away from them are completely shaken and irate; as Ogba Kaalu tells us:

> They are dumbfounded. Some came to me and quietly admonished me never to say such things again. It was a secret, a secret which they hid away from some people. The point is that there are many people here who have been looking for a way of getting a little bit of historical information - something about the ancestor that founded this village for them, something about their origins and settlement here. But it is hidden away from them. Well, I shut my mouth. Is it of any value to me?

But, it is. The revelation of the hidden facts of history, especially of those of the enemy is one of the ways in which the traditional Igbo singer can carry his audience with him in his performances. Quite often when the facade is torn apart, we hear murmurs of excitement and delight spreading through the audience. We hear such reactions quite distinctly on the tape recording of Elibe Aja B2 just at the point at which Poet B, Kaalu Igirigiri, reveals to the people of Asaga that it is with the skin of the leopard killed by their hunter-hero Elibe Aja, that the Aro decorate the shrine of their water-god, till today. As the murmur of excitement spreads, the poet consolidates his gains by a short anecdote about the effect of this revelation on the King of Arochukwu himself, during a performance at Arochukwu:

I told this to Kamalu Oji -
And he told me not to expose his secrets anymore -
That was at Aro -
I had exposed the secret of the great Aro oracle

This again provokes long uproarious laughter from the delighted audience, some of whom can be heard, in the background, speaking derogatorily of the Aro, the power of whose great sanctuary, they now know to be associated with a leopard-skin given to them by an Ohafia hero.

The function of this kind of revelation as we have already noted in chapter 4, is that it reinforces Ohafia's characteristic sense of power and superiority over its neighbours by deflating the pride of rival powers. For the traditional establishments whose secrets are torn apart - as the alleged responses of the Akara elders and the king of the Aro reveals - the effect can be highly upsetting; for the poet, the consequences of such revelations can even involve the unleashing of violence on him by the outraged establishments. But where such extreme measures are not taken against the poet-revealer of secrets, it is quite usual for chiefs and elders to issue decrees banning him from performing in their area of jurisdiction while they repair their broken fences.

9.3.4. Continuity of Tradition

The affective notions in inspiration and enlightenment, as expounded above, all point to one thing: the role of the songs as a means of preserving and maintaining the continuity of tradition. Thus, in the earlier part of one of his testimonies, quoted above, Ogba Kaalu of Abia

describes the songs as the one omenali which characterizes and unifies all Ohafia people:

> It is the one òmenàlì which binds together all Ohafia people, right from our very origins - right from the time we came into this world... It is the thing that made us a powerful nation. It is in our blood

Elsewhere (quoted above), he describes them as "the unbilical cord with which we were born" and a constant reminder to the people of their deepest cultural commitment to the ideals of personal achievement and the rewards of honour in life and death. This is why informants like the Chief of Asaga (9.2.3. above) have stressed the role of the songs in "preserving the culture of the people" and thus helping them "remember what actually happened" in the past. "It is a thing of value by itself to learn about the origins of one's nation", says Madam Maduekwe of Asaga, for, according to the Chief of Asaga, "if we are reminded of our past, it will lead us to greater things in the future":

> When we are reminded of our past, we try to hold to our own, we try to hold to our own and wherever we go, we return here to enjoy what our fathers have done to preserve this place for us. People lived here before, but our fathers had to chase them out to inherit here (spoken in English).

The whole thing is bound up with the continuance of the dogged ethnic nationalism or traditionalism which today characterizes every Ohafia man. According to the Chief priest of the Omo-ukwu temple, Idika Oge of Asaga, the most enjoyable aspect of the songs is their preoccupation with

Ohafia realities and the daily work of the people: "They say things concerning this land - the way people do their work". In similar vein, the singer Egwu Kaalu of Asaga (Poet C), confesses that his enthusiasm for the songs stem from the fact that "they are the poetry of our nativeland." Elsewhere, he sums up their role in maintaining the continuity of tradition as follows:

> The ceremony of igba-ikòrò (elsewhere in Igbo country) is a tradition of the ancients. It originated from them, in the ancient times. But people no longer perform ikòrò today, possibly owing to the spread of literacy (side-comment: Something else has taken its place); but they are able to tell stories about it. if they have poets among them they will probably be able to make songs about ikòrò and in this way ensure its continuity. That is how it is.

No composition can effectively fulfil this function unless the information it contains is widely-accepted as authentic, i.e. in terms of the traditional conceptions of "truth" (ezi-okwū) and "reality" (ife mee ème) outlined above (9.1.) and discussed in detail in the following section.

9.4. THE STANDARD OF AUTHENTICITY

As I have already pointed out (section 9.1. above) the authentic elements, which Ohafia critics define in terms of "truth" and "reality", are as follows:

(1) the representation of things as they are, i.e. the faithful reproduction of observable phenomena, without any adulteration;

(2) The summoning up of the past - ikū-aka, i.e. the re-production of "events" that actually took place in the

days of the ancestors;

(3) local colour, i.e. the realistic portrayal of "things that actually happen in this land... the way people do their work";

(4) the re-iteration widely accepted beliefs, e.g. those contained in myths; finally,

(5) emphasis on higher moral truths through parables and overt moral statements at the end of tales.

9.4.1. Mid-point Mimesis

When I asked the singer Egwu Kaalu of Asaga, to tell me what he meant by "reality", he replied:

> Let us assume you are a man of deeds - a great wrestler. Assuming that you had wrestled with someone else. Now, let us say that in the contest you won every bout, throwing your oppoent here, there and everywhere. Assuming that everyone knows exactly how you threw your opponent and that I am called upon to sing about it. I will say exactly what happened. If another person comes and says it is your opponent that threw you in the contest, I will rise up and tell that person that he does not know how to sing

Some people may view this as one of the most naive definitions of realism ever recorded. It is a statement which will offend poet-critics, like Coleridge, in whose theory of art, the opposite is urged - the avoidance of any attempt to copy "mere nature, the natura naturata":

> If the artist copies the mere nature, the natura naturata, what idle rivalry! - if he proceeds only from a given form which is supposed to answer to the notion of beauty - what emptiness, what an unreality, there always is in his productions. Believe me, you must master the essence, the natura naturans, which presupposes a bond between nature in the higher sense and the soul of man.

But just as Coleridge would mock the Ohafia artist's avowed interest in natura naturata, the Ohafia artist would, if he had the patience to consider his natura naturans, despise it as utterly irrelevant to the cultural pre-occupations of his people. For him, the true goal of poetry and art in general is that of representing things in such a way that those who hear or see them would recognize them as natura naturata. Thus Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon tells us:

> Take yourself for example: I can tell you all about your father, his mode of life and the manner of his death; and if you go nd ask your kinsmen, they will tell you that it is the truth - that your father actually led that kind of life.

The above definitions of "truth" in the Ohafia poets' approach to "reality" suggests a higher degree of verisimilitude in the thematic structure of their poems than we can discern from the texts. But this apparent discrepancy between theory and practice is explicable in terms of the quality of mid-point mimesis recognized by Thompson in traditional Yoruba sculpture (1975:31). In Yoruba sculpture, as in the Ohafia songs, what is intended is not photographic realism, but the impression of semblance, something "between abstraction and absolute likeness." We find the same quality in the ancestral images shrined in the omoukwu and other temples of ancestor-images in Ohafia. The success of these impressions rests almost entirely on the fact that the details are common knowledge. Thus, like the cartoonist, all that the poet or artist needs to do in order to win the approval of his audience is merely to emphasize by one

stroke or two, a dominant feature of a character, object place or event by means of formulas and themes.

9.4.2. Historical Knowledge

If the singer can, within the acceptable limits of mid-point mimesis, represent things as they are by means of the traditional formulas and themes which he shares with other poets, he needs something else to be able to evoke up the past in a way that his audience will approve. He needs a wide knowledge of past events, an equally wide knowledge of contemporary cultural and social realities which are a consequence of the past, and he needs the ability to rise above ethnocentric interest to deal with matters of 'national' interest with a sense of responsibility and fairness.

In the following boast, Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon gives us some idea of the kind of extensive historical knowledge a poet must display before his audience before they can accept his works as authentic. It must involve knowledge of individual genealogies and, more than that, the history, culture and social life of, not just one lineage-group but all the lineage-groups in Ohafia:

> I can tell you all about your father, his mode of life and the manner of his death; and if you go and ask your kinsmen, they will surely tell you that it is the truth - that your father actually led that kind of life. I can tell you all about your own ancestry, right from the very God that created you, down to the present time; and I can tell you all about the mode of life your kinsmen lead today. None of my rivals knows anything about these things.
> Take Ohafia as a whole. I can tell you all about our origins - about the place from which we migrated

> to this place. None of my rivals knows anything of these things. No one else in Ohafia but myself knows anything about these things.
> This compound of ours, I can tell you all about its founding father. About other people's compounds, I can tell you all about their founding fathers. When I go to Amaekpu, I tell them all about their founding fathers. None of my rivals knows anything about these things.
> As you will know, Amaekpu is not my native village. But I know everything that prevails there. Ebem, I know everything that prevails in that village. Asaga, I know everything about their founding father and I know everything that prevails there, everything conceivable that prevails there. This is what we call ikū-aka - knowledge of the ancestors: knowledge of the founding father of Asaga, knowledge of the founding father of Akaanu, knowledge of the founding father of Uduma. My rivals know nothing of these things.

Ogba Kaalu of Abia makes the same point, placing more emphasis on the knowledge of traditions of origins and migrations:

> I sing my songs in many different styles, in whatever style my patron wants it, right from the very beginning, concerning the origins of Ohafia, how we emigrated from the place from which we came here; right from the beginning, concerning the birth of our nation, including all the surrounding nations: including Akoli, including even you people who live far out there, I can tell you all about your origins, including even Loori, and Lookpa, and I can tell you about their ways of life, including Bende, up to Alayi, and up to Umuhu, and up to Abiriba, and up to Igbere and up to Ikwere, and I can tell you how my own people migrated to Abia, how we came to settle at Abia, and I will go on and on and tell you everything about the way of life of various peoples. All these I learnt from my father. There is a tape-recording mechanism inside my head. I have gone far beyond the stage of apprenticeship.

Armed with extensive historical knowledge of this kind, a good singer must be able to rise above ethnocentricism and sing

about the heroes of "all the lineages" not just of his own lineage. This criterion is applied by Ukoha Agwunsi of Okon (a follower of Kaalu Igirigiri) to discredit Echeme Ogwo of Ebem (Poet E) in favour of his master:

> There is someone named Echeme, who sings at Ebem. He only eulogizes his kinsmen, since he knows nothing of heroes that lived in all the lineages. He is still a mere apprentice.

This, he says, contrasts with the practice of the master-singer, Kaalu Igirigiri, the master of balanced hero-lists. According to another follower of Kl, Kaalu Ikpo of Okon:

> The reason why this one (i.e. Kaalu Igirigiri) is such an effective singer is this: he can range over the whole of Nigeria, and when he sings, he will make sure that he calls this person, calls that person and calls that other person. He does not stick to one person. He will go on calling - this person, that person and that other person - until he calls all of them.

This quality of the compositions has been dealt with in some detail in chapter 3 (section 3.2.4.) above.

9.4.3. Local Colour and the pleasure of Recognition

I now come to the third level of the meaning of truth and reality in Ohafia literary criticism, i.e. the identification of "truth" and "reality" with objects, places and persons recognized by the hearers of the song and with the pleasure that comes with this recognition. Thus, when in a testimony quoted above, the Chief of Asaga stresses the fact that "even the last ruling paramount chief is mentioned", he is in fact telling us how much pleasure he derives from the recognition of his own ancestors in the tales. A person who recognizes his ancestor in heroic poetry is bound to base his whole

response to the rest of the performance on this recognition. Everything else would sound true to him, especially if in subsequent lines he recognizes other "things concerning this land." As we have observed several times in the preceeding exposition, every singer knows the magic of appealing to human vanity by paying homage to their hosts through their ancestors, thus preparing them to accept everything else in their songs as true. As Egwu Kaalu of Asaga tells us:

> I respond to every invitation. Whatever my hosts say I should for them, i.e. to suit the occasion for which my services are needed, I will sing that thing for them. If they ask me if I know how to sing it, I will say: yes, I can sing it. If I cannot meet any particular request, I will say so. But, in general, I begin by eulogizing my hosts after which I tell them about lives of their own fathers.

Having done this, the singer can proceed to the larger issues of the heroic age, assured that his hosts will agree with him at every point. But apart from the effects of homage, ethnic pride and chauvinism play an important role in determining what audiences accept as authentic. For instance, whereas everyone would normally accept the derogation of the Aro in Elibe Aja, as we have seen above (8.2.2.), any such presentation of the Ohafia people would be violently rejected. In effect then, truth is no more than tribal pride.

9.4.4. Conformity with widely-accepted beliefs

No one listening to heroic poetry in Ohafia will question anything in the songs - no matter how fantastic it might sound to the outsider to the culture - provided it does not contradict widely-accepted beliefs. During my

field investigation, I referred Kaalu Igirigiri (Poet B) to one of his versions of the tale of Nne Acho Ugo (Text B1) expecting that he would confirm my own independent interpretation of it as a parable, an interpretation which Ukiwe Maduekwe of Asaga agrees with completely, but not on my prompting. Surprisingly enough, Kaalu Igirigiri insisted that the story is not a fable or parable but an account of things which actually happened. He says of Nne Acho Ugo and her children:

> They are not human beings. It was that mother of theirs that was human, but she gave birth only to birds. That mother of theirs was human, but she gave birth to birds only.

He then goes on to rationalize:

> Nne Acho Ugo... behaved very much like what we call nkịtā-iyī (River-dog). Nkịtā-iyī lives in the river. It isn't human. It isn't fish, this nkịtā-iyī. It isn't a beast, this nkịtā-iyī. It isn't a type of fish. It isn't a beast. It has the tail of a mudskipper; it has a beard - mammalian hair. It lives in water and also lives on land. When it gives birth - this nkịtā-iyī - she can produce a beast of the forest. Quite often, when fish see its tail, they gather round it thinking it is one of them. But it eats fish... Just as it isn't fish and isn't beast, so Nne Acho Ugo Erueghe was. She wasn't human... She was human as well as bird.

Kaalu Igirigiri goes on to state that Nne Acho Ugo actually lived at Elu - the capital of Ohafia - and that it was on account of this that she came to be widely known throughout the land:

> Nne Acho Ugo Erueghe, where she lived - she lived at Elu Ohafia Ezhema - the place where we all lived once. That is why all Ohafia people know her.

I have dealt with this testimony in such detail in order to point out how easy it can be to dismiss as "fantastic", elements such as the above, which in fact constitute part of the widely-accepted beliefs of a society in which oral literature functions. Without the benefit of Kaalu Igirigiri's testimony, it would have been difficult to approach the story in any other way than as a parable. But at every stage of the testimony other people supported the views of the poet by side-comments and the nodding of heads. It may well be that these people are so used to believing Kl's tales that they no longer challenge anything he says. But it could not be a willing suspension of disbelief. There are times and situations in which people cannot but accept the fantasies of myth and legend as true: i.e. especially when these fantasies answer to their aspirations, prejudices and religious faith.

9.4.5. The Higher Moral Truth

The higher moral truths of the poems are occasionally stated in explicit terms as the close of some of the stories. This gives much delight, provoking comments of various kinds which say a lot about the listeners' gratitude for the insights offered them. But more appealing is the moral deduced from the underlying allegoric or parabolic structure of a tale like Nne Acho Ugo, inspite of the author's insistence that it is a factual account. Ukiwe Maduekwe's response is that it is an ilu - a parable in which birds have been used to represent genuine historical characters

and situations. Here is his exegesis of the tale:

> ...When they (the poets) come to talk in the form of parable (ilu), it must be understood that they refer to the actions of particular individuals in the past. About Nne Acho Ugo, it is most probable that the story refers to a real human being - a person who had children - five children. These children boasted among themselves that when their mother died they would do this or that for her. It may be - according to the pattern of life in those days - that, as their mother or father was about to die, one of them went to the wars and got lost there. Another may have gone as well and got lost. Another may have followed and got lost. So only one among them was left. Only one among them was left..

The traditionality of this parabolic interpretation of the song is however vitiated by the fact that the informant had been a Presbyterian pastor and that no one else, other than educated people like himself offered the same kind of view.

9.4.6. Authoritativeness and Acceptability

What most people consider as authentic in compositions is not always related to the features of theme and style outlined above; sometimes it is related only to what they know of the singer's background and training, his past successes, his fame and popularity. All these contribute to enhancing the authority and acceptability of the poet (see chapter 3, section 3.3).

Apart from the singer's background and training, another factor commonly taken into account in evaluating the authenticity and authority of the works of a poet is the degree of fame or popularity he has already attained. Of course, this kind of evaluation is not peculiar to Ohafia. It is a stock-in-trade of the literate book market that a

name such as Solzheniskin or Achebe rather than the actual merits of particular new works is often enough to commend the writer to readers, whose assessment might just be: 'A new novel by Achebe? It must be good!'

Not surprisingly, therefore, Ohafia singers and their followers take every opportunity that offers itself to boast to their audiences about their journeys, triumphs, the big events in which they featured as star artists, and, generally, the country-wide popularity they command. Here, for example, is the response of Ogba Kaalu of Abia when I asked him if he could sing:

> I am not the one to tell you that, you should ask the people of this town. And when you go to Ohafia you can inquire about my name. When you go to Enugu you will see my name. When you go to Aba, you will see my name. When you go to Umuahia, you will see my name. I am the one called Ogba Kaalu. I am a native of Abia.

According to Ogba Kaalu, even his rivals - for instance, Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon - acknowledge his superiority as a singer:

> You must have noticed that Kaalu Igirigiri is always talking about me - always talking of Ogba! Ogba! I am the one and only Ogba about whom he has talked so much - offspring of the matriclan of Ebosi Ego. I am the one and only Ogba about whom he has talked so much .

He then alludes to some notable occasions at which his rival felt so embarrassed by his presence that he was unable to perform at all without first consulting him:

> It is only when occasions involve dignitaries that you can see me singing. I remember the day we

> went to receive my brother, Eni Njoku, who died in England. We went to receive his remains at the aeroplane field. Kaalu Igirigiri did not sing any song. He kept asking if I had come. He had been looking for me. You see, he always writes to me inviting me to accompany him to other towns to sing, but I have always turned down these invitations, because I have no time to go out singing in other towns. The point is that it is here, where I am settled as a doctor, that my taproot is. But anytime something really momentous crops up, you will certainly see me come to sing.

These comments reflect a general Igbo dislike for professionalism in song-making. Elsewhere, OK brutally detracts Kaalu Igirigiri for commercializing the tradition of heroic poetry by tending towards sheer professionalism. But, even though he mocks, K1 is able to commercialize only because the place has been left vacant by better singers, now otherwise pre-occupied.

On his own part, Kaalu Igirigiri takes every chance to tell us about his wide-ranging historical knowledge, as in one of the testimonies quoted above (9.4.2). In addition, he takes glory in the fact that even scholars from the Universities have now come to recognize him as the source of authentic information on local history; this, he says is a clear acknowledgement of his superiority to his rivals:

> There are people who come all the way from Nsukka, where they are engaged in research. They come, sent by the white man to learn about the traditions of their native villages, about their origins, about the founding fathers of their villages. They come to me. Some have just come this month, and I told them things with which they will do their research. That is why I am greater than my rivals.

Another point raised by Kaalu Igirigiri and his followers is that while other singers boast of popularity within Ohafia

and elsewhere in Igbo country, Kaalu's fame now extends over the whole of Nigeria. Thus, the drummer, Kaalu Ikpo asserts:

> There is no place we have not performed. In Lagos....in Kaduna...in Calabar. There is no place we have not performed this iri-aha.

If a poet can command the respect and acceptability of so large a national audience, he cannot be neglected by the local audience of his own native community.

The last extra-textual factor taken into account in evaluating the authenticity and authority of a singer's works is his age. It is largely on the grounds of age that Egwu Kaalu of Asaga concedes the fact that Kaalu Igirigiri is a better singer than himself:

> The fact is that Kaalu Igirigiri is a grand old man. He is an excellent singer. You see. He is Echeme's father-in-song. Kaalu Igirigiri is now a grand old man.

The point is clinched by Madam Maduekwe's side comment: "Kaalu Igirigiri is now a graduate of long-standing."

9.5. THE STANDARD OF CLARITY

The standard of clarity is born out of the need to ensure that the affective values of history, as outlined above are not lost to the audience in oral performance. As has been pointed out, its basic facet is expressed by Ogba Kaalu's phrase, imezikwa ka odoo anya nke oma (putting things in such a way that they would be clearly perceptible to everyone). In many ways, this standard closely resembles the criterion of visibility identified by Thompson in

traditional Yoruba art criticism: "Visibility," Thompson writes, "refers...to clarity of form and to clarity of of the line": "Carvers seek to express generalized principles of humanity. They carve . . . nonetheless, with ultimate sharpness of clarity and focus (1975:35). In the traditional criticism of Ohafia, the notion of clarity, refers primarily to the unity and coherence of narrative form and is offered as a criterion for assessing the triumphs and failures of a truly historical narrative; but in many of the testimonies recorded, we find it applied in many different ways in the evaluation of themes, language and vocalization.

9.5.1. Clarity of Themes

Egwu Kaalu of Asaya is by far the most perceptive exponent of the standard of clarity, so far as it pertains to themes. In the following testimony, in which he acknowledges the fact that Kaalu Igirigiri is a better singer than himself, he rebukes the master for departing from the plain facts of history and bringing in "extraneous elements." Any truly historical narrative must deal with the facts in a "straightforward manner" and should not bring in other elements:

> He is a better singer than myself. He is a better singer than myself. But you must understand that we are dealing with 'history'. The thing about our history is that in relating it, you must do so in a straightforward manner The problem with these people (Kaalu Igirigiri and Echeme Ogwo of Ebem) is that when they sing, they bring in extraneous elements which do not contribute to this straightforward manner of presenting reality.

Elsewhere EK makes the same point with a slightly different emphasis:

> The poetry of our land is unique. They (the poets) do not get themselves entangled in all sorts of extraneous things. They restrict their narrations to just those things which they know to be the facts of history. They begin eulogizing, then proceed to talk about just those things they know to have actually happened. You see.

Another way of achieving thematic clarity, as we are told by Ogba Kaalu of Abia, is by addition rather than removal - the addition of as many details as possible so that the listener will never at any stage be at loss in following the plot of the story as a whole or any stage of its development. According to Ogba Kaalu, the singer must inform, explain and carry his audience with him, especially by exploiting the full dramatic possibilities of dialogue and the re-enactment of the pathetic cries and happy utterances of characters. Thus, for this critic, it is a serious breach of art to involve one's self in irresponsible abridgement. This is the basis of his criticism of Kaalu Igirigiri's work at Akara, after my field assistant had played back Amoqu B5 and Nne Mqbaafo B3 to him:

> There are many things which we spell out clearly by name, which Kaalu Igirigiri does not put into his songs, Thus, he fails to represent things as they really are. He cuts them up into small unrelated bits. But when we, on our part, sing it, we explain to you quite clearly how everything went, from the beginning to the end... He cuts them up into small bits...
> There is a person whose story he tells - I mean Amoogu, the person that first fired the gun, with which the short-armed-one of Niike was killed. If you are told how this really happened, from its beginning to the end, tears will roll down from your eyes. But he compresses it far too much.

> The pathetic cry of Amoogu's mother, he did not reproduce it properly; yes the pathetic cry of Amoogu's mother, he did not reproduce it properly. That's one thing. The questions asked by Amoogu's mother, he did not reproduce them properly. There was a question which Amoogu's mother asked: O where is my dear son?... She was told her son was on the way. But at night, her son's head was placed for her on a fence in a bathing enclosure and she was told to go there and take her bath so she would see what was placed there for her. When she got there, she found it was the head of her son. Kaalu Igirigiri did not put this detail into his composition.

Ogba Kaalu then goes on to list other 'essential details' omitted by Kaalu Igirigiri in his composition and concludes:

> When he sings - when Kaalu Igirigiri sings - he does not seem to have the ability to sing in such a way that it will be quite clear to you - so that it will be quite clear to you from what he actually puts into the song, so that you can see it clearly from its beginning to the end. When we, on our part, sing it, we put in even the lament of that woman when her son returned. There is a way in which one can simulate that lament and tears will roll down from your eyes.

Kaalu Igirigiri's response to this criticism appears to be his repeated assertion that complete invocation is a better means of achieving thematic balance, and hence clarity. It is however noticable that in his most recent compositions (1976), he has seen the need to put in many more details than we can discern in his previous works.

9.5.2. Clarity of Language

According to Egwu Kaalu of Asaga, any form of poetry which has 'history' as its subject matter, must strive indefatigably towards clarity of expression. Here, the standard of clarity is invoked to repudiate euphuism or the excessively ornate style. This occurs when inexperienced singers make

excessive use of proverbs and other figurative devices - ilu - in their works. Thus, Egwu Kaalu warns: "excessive use of proverbs is not good" (itiikàri ilu adighi mmã); understandably, he concedes, "proverbs are an essential ingredient of speech" (eji ilu aka uka), but they function effectively only in certain types of discourse. In historical poetry where the most essential elements are the plain facts, proverbs are not really necessary. They are in fact "extraneous elements" (ife òdùò). Used excessively, they merely distort the facts and in the end produce quite a different type of poetry (abù òdùò) than was intended:

> If a person repeatedly employs proverbs, it can only be said that he is 'putting in' another kind of poetry; because, if you want to sing a song, in a straightforward manner, about the actual deeds of a particular person - if you really want to articulate the facts clearly, from the beginning to the end - you don't need to put in extraneous things into it.

At best, says Egwu Kaalu, "proverbs can function as devices for completing a verse" (imẽjuru uka) or for "remembering what you sing" (ichèta ife i nà-àgu):

> If you like, you can use proverbs for the purposes of completing a verse; and you can also use it to remember what you sing. But, if you really wish to articulate the facts clearly... you simply have to speak directly to your audience, You may say: This is what the particular hero (I will sing about) did. People will pay attention. You will then have to give a clear account of everything, from the beginning to the end.

The sum of Egwu Kaalu's observations is that there is no particular value to be derived from the use of ilu or any other figurative device unless it contributes to the total meaning of the composition in which it is used.

Significantly, he does his best, in his own compositions, to measure up to this standard, as evidenced by the following appreciation of a striking metaphor in one overheard by Ukiwe Maduekwe at Asaga:

> There is one sentence - one sentence which he uttered in his song last night. He started singing that song in this very house. It is a very meaningful song. He said:
>
> palmwine finished in the pot,
> but it has gone to sleep in the cup;
> palmwine finished in the pot,
> but it has gone to live in the cup.
>
> It is a very very meaningful statement:
>
> palmwine finished in the pot,
> but it has gone to live in the cup.
>
> It is an ilu:
>
> palmwine finished in the pot,
> but it has gone to live in the cup.

Subsequently, the following interpretation was offered in collaboration with Madam Maduekwe and the poet himself:

> The occasion (of the statement) was a ceremony organized by his father (the father of the poet's host) here in Asaga. It was so very grand that the whole place was filled with people. That is why our good brother here decided to compose a song about it, in which he told the story of the life of his host's father.
>
> Pastor Maduekwe He went on and on and on telling this story, he went on telling the story, until he got ready to go. That was the time he made the statement. He said:
>
> palmwine finished in the pot,
> but it went to live in the cup.
>
> He then went home with that story.
>
> Madam Maduekwe: What he means is that the community was now very short of good people. Only a few remained, in the cup - only a very small number was left.
>
> Pastor Maduekwe: So, 'palmwine has finished in the pot'.

Madam Maduekwe: The community is short of good people; only a very small number remained, including the son of that man (i.e. the poet's host).
Pastor Maduekwe: So, the remainder has gone to live in the cup.
Egwu Kaalu: Very true. Very true.
Pastor Maduekwe: As you can see, my wife also heard it. I myself was inside the house when I heard it and I immediately knew what it meant. Palmwine has finished in the pot.
Madam Maduekwe: His mother had died, leaving the small one behind.
Pastor Mauekwe: That is, he went to live in the cup - he went to live in the cup.

9.5.3. Clarity of Form

Notice the recurrence of the phrase, 'from the beginning to the end" in the above - quoted testimonies. Both Ogba Kaalu and Egwu Kaalu speak repeatedly òf izā ya isi goruo àlì (taking it from its head and placing it gently on the ground) and also of ikōwakwahù zia isī ruo àlì (clearly explaining from the head to the ground). Similarly, when Ogba Kaalu accuses Kaalu Igirigiri of engaging in irresponsible abridgement, he refers, as follows, to the standard formal clarity, which he claims to follow in his own compositions: "When we on our part sing the same tale, we clearly explain to you how everything happened, from the very beginning to the end" (si a mmàlite ruo ùsòtù ya). Contrarily, when Kaalu Igirigiri sings the same tale:

> He does not seem to have the ability to sing in such a way that it will be quite clear to you - so that it will be quite clear to you from what he actually puts into the song, so that you can see it clearly from its beginning to the end.

9.5.4. Clarity of Vocalization

Naturally, in an oral tradition, a great deal of attention is paid to the quality of the poet-singer's voice. An inaudible or raucous voice in an oral poem is as bad as an illegible script. Not surprisingly, therefore, many singers boast about the sweetness of their voices. We have already referred to the following boast in which Kaalu Igirigiri asserts that "the sweetness of the voice" is the highest attribute of oral poetry:

> My voice is sweet. But on top of that, I tell them things which gladden their hearts. That is what sustains me in my songs. There are people who insist on singing when they do not have a sweet voice. No one likes what such people sing. As for me, my voice is sweet, and I sing those things which when people hear them, their hearts swell with joy, and they say, "These are things that actually happened". But it is the sweetness of the voice that they like above everything else.

It is this high evaluation of the sweetness of the singer's voice that has given rise to the standard praise-names for him discussed in chapter 3, above:

Olu nkwà (musical voice)
Olu ogèlè (gong-like voice)
Okòòko tūrū nkwà yiri olu (parrot that built a musical instrument and wears it in his throat)
Òkòòko nkàm nkà (parrot, the talkative artist)
Òjì olu èkwu nnù (He that buys salt with his voice)

From the first two of these praise-names, we can deduce the kind of voice regarded by the people as sweet, i.e. the sonorous voice, the musical voice. This is very much in consonance with the qualities described by Okoreaffia(n.d) as those demanded by the Igbo of their story-tellers:

> A raucous voice is not good for the purpose of story-telling. A high-pitched voice does not go far. A sweet voice, like ògelè, sounds kem kem kem and can also sound bìàm-bìàm-bìàm as audiences usually want it.[4]

Referring specifically to the Ohafia situation, Ogba Kaalu of Abia denounces poet E (Echeme Ogwo of Ebem) because olu yā nà-adà ikike ikike (he sings in a high-pitched voice). Heroic poetry "does not require a high-pitched voice" (ọ chogh olu ikē); however, there are points in a narrative where the pitch of the voice needs to be raised (eruo ebe ètii olu ikē), i.e. primarily during transitions from the main narrative passage to lyrical or invocative passages.

But the possession of a sweet voice is not a guarantee that one would become a good singer of tales. According to Egwu Kaalu of Asaga, "To sound proper in songs, the voice must have the right kind of modulation" (olu abù ọ nwee ọtù esì èdowe yā). This can only be acquired through training under a master-singer. Thus, Kaalu Igirigiri reports:

> If you are a singer and it is recognised that your voice is sweet, Ohafia people will tell you: Go and meet Kaalu Igirigiri. He will teach you how to sing. Your voice is sweet.

From this master, the apprentice will learn, in addition to the art of ikū-aka (summoning up the past), the techniques of "articulating his words in such a way that they would be clearly audible" (ikāpùsà ife ànụ ànụ ntì). The importance attached to this technique is evident in the frequency with which it is evoked by critics and appreciators alike when ranking one singer against another. For instance, in

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4. "Olu mgbakara adịgh mma iji akọ akụkọ. Olu pịpị pipi anagh ejeti aka. Olu ụtọ di ka ogele, na-ada kem kem kem, adagharịkwa bịam bịam bịam, ka ọha na-achọ."

ranking Kaalu Igirigiri above his poetic son, Echeme Ogwo, Ukaoha Agwunsi and Kaalu Ikpo stress the fact that o nà àkapùsa ife ànu ànu ntì (he articulates his words in such a way that they are clearly audible).

9.6. THE STANDARD OF CREATIVE VARIATION

In consonance with our observations in the previous chapter, Ohafia critics evaluate original and individual talent in terms of the richness of a singer's repertoire of stories, his command of themes, formulas and other devices of composition, the degree of creative improvisation he is capable of, especially in response to new contexts of situation, and the established convention of paying homage to patrons and local audiences, without destroying the truth of tradition; further, they judge originality in terms of the singer's ability to increase his repertoire by creating new stories on contemporary themes while preserving the inherited heroic ideals; finally, they judge originality, as critics anywhere would, in terms of the singer's ability to reconstruct stories told him or those borrowed from other poets, so imaginatively, that they become fully identifiable with him. All these aspects of the traditional standard of creative variation may be conveniently discussed under the following headings:

(1) change,

(2) growth, and

(3) imaginative reconstruction.

9.6.1 Change and Variety

In the following boast, Kaalu Igirigiri of Okon gives us a brief outline of the kind of 'change' in a singer's repertoire of stories.

> I make many changes when I sing my songs. I even make changes in the traditional choric songs (ilu ọkwukwe). But more importantly, I can easily switch from the old heroic songs - the ones inherited from the ancients - to new songs about the events of today. I can sing newly-created songs - those which nobody in Ohafia has heard before.

To this statement, Kaalu Ikpo of Okon (who was present at the interview), adds that "our poetry is not of one kind." By this he means that every good singer must be equipped to make the kind of switches referred to above by Kaalu Igirigiri This he compares to the way in which hymns are varied in churches and gramaphone records offer new things in their two sides.

> It is just like we have in a church service. We are all the time changing. We change and say: This one is this, that one is that, this other one is that - like a gramophone record. Doesn't a record have a front and a back. Our poetry is just like that.

In another comment, at the same interview, Ukaoha Agwunsi offers the following appreciation of the phenomenon of change in performances:

> Once he (Kaalu Igirigiri) has finished singing about a particular hero, he will not mention that hero again in the same performance. Other songs will now be sung in a completely different voice[5].

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5. 'Voice' here (olu) = a metaphor for 'style'.

9.6.2. Growth

The changes wrought by the singers in their compositions is explained in terms of the following extended metaphor of shifting cultivation and growth by Egwu Kaalu of Asaga:

> It is very much like farming. You clear a piece of land and plant yams in it. After this, you harvest the yams and plant seed yams on the land. Eventually (during the next planting season), you will dig out the seed-yams and leave the land fallow. You then go and clear another piece of land and plant your seed-yams there, followed by another harvest and the plantation of seed yams, after which you will leave the land fallow again. Our poetry is very much like that.

The "seed-yams" are of course the stable devices of composition planted by the singers in a wide variety of new contexts, season after season and year after year. In the course of these shifting cultivations and harvests, says Maduekwe of Asaga, "poetic knowledge increases." Egwu Kaalu agrees and offers another extended metaphor:

> It grows. It is plentiful. It is somewhat like going through school. After going through one page you turn to another page and after going through that page you turn to another, and so on. The same is true of our poetic practice.

"The pages", he explains, "are the stories told by old men."

Despite increases in poetic knowledge, the meaning of the songs remain "essentially unchanged." This is what Kaalu Igirigiri means when he declares:

> I don't sing my songs, at Okon, in a form different from that in which I sing them at Asaga. The thing I sing at Okon is what I sing at Asaga, it is also what I sing at Ebem... That is why Ohafia people all agree that I am the best of all the poets.

In a similar vein, Egwu Kaalu asserts:

> Nothing extraneous is put into the songs. By that I mean that it is exactly what I sang in 1972 that I will sing today.

The apparent inconsistency of these statements will resolve themselves if we view them as referring to what Kaalu Olugu of Eziafo, whose testimony was quoted above (9.2.2.) distinguishes as "the bone within the thing" (the essence) as opposed to its "outward vibrations".

9.6.3. Imaginative Recreation

In his Principles of Literary Criticism, I.A. Richards distinguishes "six distinct senses of the word, 'imagination,' namely:

1. The production of vivid images, usually visual images...
2. The use of figurative language ...
3. ... Sympathetic reproducing of other people's states of mind, particularly emotional states.
4. Inventiveness, the bringing together of elements that are not ordinarily connected ...
5. ... an ordering of experience in definite ways and for definite ends or purposes, not necessarily deliberate and conscious, but limited to a given field of phenomena. The technical triumphs of the arts are instances of this kind of imagination.

In stating the sixth and last sense of the word, Richards quotes a well-known definition offered by Coleridge in Biographia Literaria:

> The sympathetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination... reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities...

> the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement. "The sense of musical delight ... effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought and feeling.

A closer examination of the testimonies quoted above will show that most of these aspects of imagination claimed in one way or another by Ohafia singers, as far as the standard of creative variation or change is concerned, are those underlined in the two passages quoted above, especially Coleridge's definition of imagination as "the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects." The sense of "novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects" is one of the most recurrent themes in traditional Ohafia literary criticism. We find it expressed in statements such as the following, in which Kaalu Igirigiri boasts of his ability to reconstruct any story told him, so imaginatively that even the original narrator will respond to it with a "sense of novelty and freshness":

> You have just told me that you are a native of Isukwuata. Well, then, let us say that before leaving my house now you told me all about the way of life of your own people. When I come to sing about it, sometime in the future, I will do it in such a way that even you yourself will have to learn it all over again. That is why I say I am a better singer of tales than all my rivals.

Taken together with many other aspects of the various testimonies on functionality, authenticity, clarity and creative variation, in the earlier sections of the present Chapter, this unequivocal reassertion of the principle of imaginative recreation in poetic art underlines the fact that the functional and aesthetic standards on which the Ohafia people base their positive evaluation of the narrative war

songs are by no means as unique as the precursors of a unique African aesthetic would have us believe. The testimonies merely make use of local imagery and pertinent allusions to local historical and socio-cultural conditions to re-affirm universal and perennial principles of art. Nevertheless, they provide valuable insights into the true nature of the art and social significance of the songs, confirming and extending the observations made in the previous Chapters.

CHAPTER 10

EVALUATION, SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE SONGS

10.1. INTRODUCTION

The survival of any form of literature depends to a large extent on how far it is positively evaluated by the members of the society in which it flourishes. Thus, H.F. Hockett stresses the factor of evaluation in the following carefully-worded definition of literature:

> In every society known to history and anthropology, with one insignificant exception[1], there are discourses, short and long, which members of the society agree on evaluating positively and which they insist shall be repeated from time to time in essentially unchanged form. These discourses constitute the literature of that society (1958:554).

In a similar vein, Andrezjewski and Innes have pointed out, with special reference to African oral literature, that "evaluation is implicit in the very survival of certain tales etc; presumably those items which are approved are handed on from generation to generation and others which are less well regarded cease to be told and are lost" (1975:48).

The survival of the narrative war songs of the Ohafia Igbo in the form in which they are available to us is due to the wide positive evaluation which they have enjoyed over the

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1. "The one insignificant exception", according to Hockett, "is our own complex Western social order. For us, also, some discourses are highly valued and others are not; but, peculiarly - and unlike anything known in other societies - the discourse which the literary specialist values most highly tend to be most despised by the layman. One result of this strange situation is that Western society is a very bad point of departure if we want to understand the typical nature of literature" (1958:554).

generations as the highest literary product of the Ohafia culture, "the only form of iri which everyone in Ohafia confesses that he enjoys" (see section 9.3.1 above). As we have seen in the last Chapter, this kind of positive evaluation has continued to the present day. Its continuity is related to acculturation processes in the Ohafia society; as a consequence, the heroic ideals associated in the heroic age with the practice of head-hunting have come to be identified with the ideal of personal success in a whole range of contemporary business, academic, political and other pursuits. As we are told by Uka:

> ...it is proper to point out that one of the qualities possessed by the ancient Ohafia warriors was faithfulness to the cause for which they fought. No amount of money or overtures could make them betray their high command or reveal their war plans to the enemy. They were motivated to participate in the wars not out of love of money but by the sheer desire to win an honoured place among their people. They engaged in the wars to show courage and fortitude and the love of adventure.
> One other remarkable characteristic of the so-called "Abam" (i.e. the larger cultural grouping of which Ohafia is a part) is their ability to adapt to changing conditions. The Aro Expedition of 1901-1902 culminated in the destruction of the myth of the Long Juju at Aro Chukwu. This dealt a shattering blow to the machinations of the Aro agents. It also in time resulted in putting an end to the head hunting adventures of the ancient warriors of Igbo land. As Pax Brittanica spread throughout Southern Nigeria, trade followed the flag and Missionary work soon became established in the area by the Scottish Presbyterians. Wherever the Missionaries settled they established churches which were soon followed by schools.
>
> In the Ohafia village group (sic.), in particular, church attendance was at first organized on an age-group (i.e. age-grade) basis, on the pattern followed in the prosecution of the ancient wars in accordance with the conditions agreed on between the chiefs and the Missionaries. As members of an age group (i.e. age-grade) became converted to Christianity, it was made mandatory for them to send their sons to the village Mission School.

> Sanctions were imposed on those who failed to comply.
>
> Pupils who successfully completed primary education were recruited to the service of the Christian Missions as teachers, evangelists and clerks. Promising pupil teachers were selected for further training at Hope Waddell (Training Institute), Calabar, as school masters or "big teachers", as they were popularly called locally.
>
> The teachers in those days enjoyed a high and enviable status in the community, and those who had attended the white man's school were generally held in high regard. In time the desire to go to school superceded the desire to engage in warfare, and the winning of certificates soon replaced the passion to bring back heads in battle (italics mine). School products found ready employment and earned regular wages. The idea of regular salaries was something new to the culture and was very fascinating to the people. Salaried employment enabled a young man to dress, speak and act like the white man, with whom he had now come to identify. In time the idea of schooling became quite popular, and village after village raised large sums of money which they handed over to the white missionary so that he would send them a teacher and establish a school for their children. Consequently, there is today no village in these clans which has no school of its own, and the idea of communal support for education has become a tradition among the Ohafia village group (sic.) Ohafia is also one of the few communities in Nigeria that can boast of having produced a large number of university graduates (i.e. through their programme of communal support for education). It is a remarkable transformation that the people have been able to channel their energies from the winning of heads in battle to the pursuit of success in education and commerce (1972: 81-82).

This pattern of continuity and change is not unconnected with the continuing social relevance and appeal of the Ohafia war songs in the society today. This is the purport of the following testimony, in which Ogba Kaalu of Abia (Poet D) explains the ways in which the performance of the songs in honour of contemporary heroes (wealthy businessmen and academics) serves to highlight the interrelationships between the challenges posed by head-hunting in the

heroic age and those posed by the necessity to win success in the literate and monetized culture of the present day:

> Today, head-hunting is out of fashion. But if you grow rich or become highly educated, especially if you go to the white man's land and return with your car and immense knowledge, we would naturally perform them (the songs) for you. The point is that by doing these things, you have won your own battle honours. Passing your examinations well and bringing home the white man's money: these are the prevailing kinds of war we have today. If you achieve these, they are counted for you as your own battle honours. The same is true of building a big house, one that is truly imposing. People will say (on seeing it): your money is your own battle-trophy. On the day such a house will be opened, we would normally perform for you, for by building it, you have won your own head in battle, for things of this kind are the only kind of head-hunting that exists in our present-day culture.

It is however to be wondered how much longer this state of affairs will last. More and more, the processes of acculturation in the Ohafia society are fast reaching their elastic limits. The pressures of modernism are fast undermining the ideological basis of the spirit of community on which is based the positive evaluation of the societal ideals expressed in the songs; secondly, the same forces - especially the spread of mass literacy and the decline of commitment among the singers of the songs as culture-bearers and exponents of a great heroic tradition - are fast undermining the very bases of the survival of the songs themselves. In the next section of this Chapter, an attempt will be made to understand the nature and effects of these factors, with a view to reaching some conclusions about their present tendencies and the future that seems to lie before them.

Essentially, this discussion will present an inverse picture of the socio-cultural and historical setting presented in Chapter I. While in Chapter I we were concerned with the kind of environment out of which the songs sprang and in which they have been flourishing over the generations, we shall be concerned here with the kind of environment in which they seem to have passed from an active dynamic force affecting the choices and behaviour of the members of an organic community to the first phase of a process of degeneration which may well culminate in their total decay. With these insights we shall have reached obtained a complete and rounded picture of the nature and context of the songs and of their social significance.

10.2. FACTORS AFFECTING THE CONTINUITY AND SURVIVAL OF THE SONGS

If we analyse the numerous factors of social change which have a direct bearing on the continuing positive evaluation and survival of the Ohafia war songs, they will probably resolve themselves into three, namely:

(1) the decay of the spirit of community in Ohafia;

(2) the emergence of other media of entertainment;

(3) the rapid spread of mass literacy;

10.2.1. The Decay of the Spirit of Community in Ohafia

Throughout this study, attention has been focussed on the fact that the narrative war songs, and indeed all genres of Ohafia war songs, exist as a means of expressing and maintaining the continuity of the heroic ideal that the chief

aim of life is the pursuit of honour through service, even at the risk of death, to the community to which the individual belongs. We traced the roots of this idealism to the earliest period of Ohafia history, when the founding fathers led a precarious existence in an isolated territory surrounded by wild animals and alien neighbours. In these circumstances, the community found itself under strong pressure to seek an effective expedience for survival. It opted for head-hunting, a long-established practice of its alien neighbours. Head-hunting served two main purposes: to deplete the forces of the enemy, and to deter him from further forays in the domains of the community. The longer the need to defend the community from the onslaught of the enemy lasted, the more this practice became established as a modus vivendi, and as the only prerequisite for admission to honoured places in the society. In the course of time, emphasis shifted from the practice itself to the heroic ideal of which it was an expression. This ideal has survived to the present day and has come to be ramified in all facets of the social system and culture of the community. Its continuity and vitality has been maintained by various forms of ritual and art, among which the war songs are by far the most important.

The effectiveness of the war songs lie in the heroic image they present of the ancestors who took part in the affairs of the heroic age. Embellished, for the purposes of greater emotional impact on the audience by myth, legend and folklore, this heroic image has over the generations acted as

a dynamic social force affecting the choices and behaviour of the members of the Ohafia community. It presents the heroes of the heroic age as paragons of exemplary behaviour on whose lives and careers contemporary generations should, for their own survival, model their actions and behaviour. In this way, the heroic afflatus which has been responsible for the emergence of Ohafia as a resilient and powerful Igbo community has been kept alive to the present day.

Until recently, the strict adherence of individual Ohafia indigenes to the ways of their forbears has given rise to a forward-looking society whose achievements have been remarkable even in the context of the achievement-oriented Igbo society at large. The war songs, and the dramatic war dance with which they are closely associated have played a key role in making these achievements possible. As a sine qua non of ceremonies of dedication for all those about to embark on important new ventures and as a means of celebrating all forms of personal success in these human endeavors, their chief role consists in relating the achievements of contemporary heroes to those of their ancestors and presenting these achievements as contributions to the prestige and common good of the Ohafia community. It is in this sense that they serve to mark out the Ohafia people "from other Igbo people" (see the testimony of Ukiwe Maduekwe, in section 9.3.2 above). The songs are thus an embodiment and an expression of the Ohafia spirit of community, its sense of belonging to a distinctive Igbo nation, its

feelings of local nationalism.

Although this feeling of local nationalism is still manifest in the behaviour of individual Ohafia indigenes in various aspects of their contemporary pursuits, the rapid elimination of the environmental conditions which gave rise to it in the early years of Ohafia history has in turn given rise to its gradual decay. In the first place, the Ohafia community is no longer an isolated community surrounded by dangerous wild animals and hostile non-Igbo neighbours; secondly, a wider Igbo, and indeed Nigerian, nationalism has been fused or is in the process of being fused; finally, the attraction of urban life and of middle-class commercial and elitist pursuits is rapidly undermining the sense of belonging to a closely-knit traditional community and the feeling that one's achievements are for the good of one's native community. In effect, therefore, the individual is now rapidly becoming more individualistic, less committed to the ideal of serving the interests of a small local community, and more interested in the welfare and future of his own immediate family.

This change in the orientation of the individual in the Ohafia community has resulted in the growth of a new kind of audience for the war songs, a non-committed audience of literate and detribalized individuals whose enjoyment of the songs does not stem from self-identification with the mythos which they embody but from the same kind of enthusiasm which makes the culture-loving dilettante a patron or

collector of the artistic relics of the ancient culture of his native land.

The same tendency is observable even in the contemporary practice of the singers themselves. They no longer view their role as that of the exponents of a living heroic culture. Rather, they are content to function as entertainers, prepared to perform for anyone - even to outsiders - who are prepared to pay for their performances. In these circumstances, their art is fast becoming somewhat commercialized in much the same way as sculptures originally created as part of serious ritual activities in other African societies have degenerated in recent years into commercial ventures serving the curiosity of foreign tourists.

10.2.2. The Emergence of Modern Media of Popular Entertainment

It might reasonably be supposed that with the decay of the spirit of community and the serious ritual functions of the war songs, they should continue to be performed as a form of popular entertainment. In fact this has been the tendency for many years now. It is essentially for this very reason that the repertoires of the singers have been enlarged to include non-parabolic tales and general commentary on contemporary life and events. Furthermore, it is because of their emergence as a form of popular entertainment that the narratives have come to be developed as an autonomous literary activity with special contexts of performance outside the festive, celebrative and ceremonial contexts in which other categories of war song are performed in close

association with dance and ritual.

It is however difficult to forsee any future for the songs as a form of popular entertainment in the face of the rapid spread of mass-media forms of popular entertainment, such as the radio, the television and the cinema. The situation might have been different if the singers were professionals like the griots of Sene-Gambia. If this were so, one could hope for the emergence of a popular theatre in Ohafia for the dramatization and epic recital of the stories of the songs. Preoccupied as they are with the trades on which they depend for their livelihood, many singers are today highly selective of the contexts in which they do perform. Thus in a testimony, Ogba Kaalu of Abia (Poet D) rules out any question of performing in any other context other than on occasions of special importance: "My tap-root," he says, "is in this medical practice of mine... As for singing for the sake of singing, or even for money, all I can say is that I have no time for it".

The situation is that today the Ohafia audiences simply have to wait for those occasions of special significance or the arrival of a money-paying researcher like myself to hear the performances of some of their best singers. But they do not really miss their performances, for they have access to the radio and the television, now popular in Ohafia as alternative media of entertainment. In fact, many people in Ohafia today have not listened to any of the leading singers personally. They have rather heard their performances on the radio or television, from some of the disc records of the

songs now being produced in increasing numbers, or from tape-recordings made by some of their well-off kinsmen and played at leisure for entertainment.

It might be argued that the production of discs and tape-recordings of the songs is one way of preserving the songs in their authentic form. This is however true only to a limited degree. As we have already noted in the last two chapters, the appeal of the songs does not only derive from the stereotypic heroic images of ancestors presented in them, but in the ability of individual singers to vary the details of these images in response to the tastes of local audiences and in new contexts of situation. In the light of this, a performance preserved in the fixed form of a tape-recording or a disc soon becomes out-dated, at least in those essential details of creative variation which make the difference between one performance and another. No form of recording can preserve any of such details.

10.2.3. The Spread of Mass Literacy

In the final analysis, by far the most important factor which will determine the future of the Ohafia war songs is the rapid spread of mass literacy, especially with the recent programme of universal free primary education embarked upon by the Federal, state and local governments of Nigeria. For sometime now, there have been no new aspirants to the positions now occupied by the generation of singers now practising. Educated young men naturally look elsewhere for self-fulfilment. In this state of affairs, it is conceivable that, in a matter of years, when the present generation of singers

might have been depleted by death, there would be no single practioner of the art of narrative war songs anywhere in the Ohafia community. The technique of memory and the system of formulas and themes on which it is based would then have been lost and the art of the narrative war songs would have died a natural death like the heroic narrative poetries of many other cultures in other parts of the world.

10.3. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The narrative war songs of the Ohafia Igbo are essentially a dynamic medium of social control, rooted in a heroic past and oriented towards the expression of confidence in the contemporary pre-occupations of the community and faith in its future survival. They have been handed on from remote generations in the past to the present because they are an embodiment of a code and ethical norms which served the generations that created it in a heroic age, an age in which the daily life of the community was dominated by the struggle for survival against hostile environmental dangers. The actions of the men and women who fought to defend the peace and security of the community against these dangers are portrayed in the songs as embodiments of ideals on which the members of successive generations should model their lives and careers for the continuing survival and greatness of the community. Although this ethos has survived to the present day contributing to the continuing vitality and positive evaluation of the songs, it is at present being undermined by rapid social changes, including the decay of the spirit

of community, the emergence of the mass media forms of popular entertainment and the rapid spread of literacy. The result is that the songs are now passing into the first phase of a process of degeneration which, from all indications, will probably result in their total decay in a matter of years. Semi-authentic records of their form and content will however survive through tape-recordings and gramophone records. Through these as well as through studies such as the present thesis, they may well become a positive force in the development of modern African literature in the Igbo language as well as serving as valuable source materials for future studies of the Ohafia dialect, culture and social system, and the unique role of the people in the pre-colonial history of south-eastern Nigeria.

PART IV

APPENDICES & REFERENCES

APPENDIX I

REPRESENTATIVE EXAMPLES OF THE SONGS*

TEXT 17: Elibe Aja Bl

1. O di ànu olū na-àzha ofia.
   There was a certain animal which was coming out of the forest.
2. Àbia èrina Arù mmadù.
   Coming and devouring Aro men.
3. Ya bia gbuna Arù mmadù ya-egbuna mūọ ewu.
   It came and ate up men and it killed goats.
4. Wọ ohōmbe di-egbě jī egbè èghuri!gha àwò:
   They searched long for a wizard-of-guns-for-whom-the-gun-is-a-plaything:
5. Onye ȳa-àbia àgba anu onwà,
   He that would come and shoot this animal,
6. A yà-ànim yā nnū òkpòghò iso,
   He will be given five four-hundred pieces of okpogho,
7. Àni yā igbe òkàrà,
   Given a box of okara cloth,
8. Àni yā igbe nwei.
   Given a box of shirts.
9. Wọ jèwe mbèlège mbèlège wò ruo Okàgwe-Ògbàlàgà-Ndiibè-Mmàkù.
   They went stealthily stealthily came and reached Okagwe-Ogbalaga-Ndiibe-Mmaku.
10. Wọ gwēre mmāi wè mi mūọ,!si: Unu āgbata ofia-egbè ike!
    They took wine and gave to them, saying: 'You pleople shoot the forest-guns expertly!'

*Lacunae in the texts are indicated by three dots enclosed in parentheses, thus (...)

11. Wo sī Arù muo onòghò òjije mà onye olū wo:
But they said they would not go, not even one of them:

12. O di anu àbia ulùè èbguna unùò madù,
Whether or not there is a wild animal swooping upon your homes and devouring your men,

13. Wo ndē ejèghì.
They would not go.

14. Wo gaàga ogō mūo.
They went past their ogo.

15. Wo dū Ùdègbe-Ezi-Ànùnù --
They arrived at Udegbe-Ezi-Anunu --

16. Ebem Ujùrù-Kpokè-Nde-à-Mgbo-Ēnini, !wo bài ulùè Kamalū Ōnwukā,
Ebem-Ujuru-kpoke-Nde-a-Mgbo-Enini, they entered the house of Kamalu Onwuka,

17. Wò ni īgbe mmàì.
They gave a box of wine.

18. Wo gwère īgbe mmàì ni mūo, !nusia:
They took a box of wine and gave them, and they drank:

19. Arù, ùnù òbia nī?
'People of Aro, what can your mission be?'

20. Wo sī anu olū àzha ofia èbguna wō madū, o gbutugha ma o fùghù, ò gburu ewù.
They said that a certain beast was coming out of the forest and killing off their men, turning to kill their livestock when men fell short.

21. Wo sī wonde ejèghì: Arù, unù owū nde-èkpu-ohù!
They said they would not go: 'You, Aro, you are dealers-in-slaves!'

22. Wo ńde ejèghi.

They would not go:

23. 'Nde ohū gāa aha Luunya !mùò òluale?'

'Those people that went to the Luunya war, have they returned?'

24. Wo gaàga ogō mūo.

They went past their ogo.

25. Wo jèwè mbèlège mbèlègè wò du Èkidi-Ńde-Ofoàli.

They went stealthily, stealthily came and reached Ekidi-nde-Ofoali.

26. Wo jē bài ulùe Ńkùma Ōbirī-agū, nwa Ōlà,

They entered the house of Nkuma Obiri-agu, son of Ola,

27. Di-egbĕ jī egbè ègburigha àwò, nwa Nne Āgbòokē Ezĕjī --

Wizard-of-guns-for-whom-the-gun-is-a-plaything, son of great mother Agboke Ezeji --

28. Nwa nde ākpa ńgwùrù lèghè ewu:

Offspring of them that rear lizards like goats,

29. Egbuo wō madù !wo anighi àgba mkpū, ègbuo ńgwùrù wò gbara mkpū !gaa.

Who if you kill their men they will not avenge, but if you kill their lizards would rise up in quick vengeance.

30. Oō ibe a mù Kamalū Òlùgu Ēbiri,

That is the birthplace of Olugu Ebiri,

31. Òmèrè nde ēkpu olè.

Terror of the silver-peddlars

32. Wo sī wo ndē ejēghi eje, wò gaàga ogō mūo.

They said they would not go, and they went past their ogo.

33. Wo jē bài Ìbinajī-nde-Egbènyi-Ùkà.

They came to Ibinaji-nde-Egbenyi-Uka.

34. Wọ dūru ulùè Olè Kamalū, òmèrè nde Āba Àhàbà,
They arrived at the house of Ole Kamalu, terror of Nde-Aba-Ahaba,

35. Olē Kāmalū, !wo ñuo īgbe mmàì:
Ole Kamalu, they drank a box of wine:

36. 'Arù, ùnùọ òbìa nī?' Wò gwèkwa ife wọ bìà kpai.
People of Aro, what can your mission be?' and they told them why they came.

37. Wọ sī wọ ñde ejèghì mà onye olū wọ.
But they said they would not go, not even one of them.

38. Wọ dū Ugwu-Nàka-Īgbemìnì, ya rị nde bī obì wọ wō:
They came to Ugwu-Naka-Igbemini, they that live themselves alone in the isolation of their valley:

39. Nde māara ọgwù mà nwàamì wò --
People that are well versed in medicine, even their women,

40. Ibe a mū Nnàa Ntè,
Birthplace of great father Nte,

41. Ebūghi uzò aha ejèghi.
Who-if-he-does-not-lead-the-way-in-battle-there-is-no-forward-march.

42. Wọ Aūgbàa īgbe mmai, si wọ ñde ejēghi eje !mà onye olū wọ:
They drank a box of wine but said they would not go, not even one of them:

43. Wọ gāàga wò bia Nde-Awā-Ezèma-Elèchi, !ogbogbom --
They went past and arrived at Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi, Ogbogbom --

44. Ezhie ezhē āri imī lèghè nwantà:
Good chief whose nose drips like that of a child,

45. Wọ zìtepūe uzò wò azọgbuo ekē okpà,
Who on the outward journey crush the python under their heels,

46. Wo lapue alā àchii abuàli àka,
And on their homeward journey flash their hands in contempt for the breed of adders,

47. Wo jù èke mè wò gini hkè abuàli yà-ème wō!
Boasting: What did the python do to us that we should be afraid of the adder?

48. O ībe a mù Mbila Obu!
That is the birthplace of Mbila Obu!

49. O ībe a mù Àjàdu Uma Àjàdu!
That is the birthplace of Ajadu Uma Ajadu!

50. O ībe a mū Kamalū à Ngwò è!
That is the birthplace of Kamalu son of Ngwo!

51. O ībe a mū Nn à Ngwò,
That is the birthplace of great father Ngwo,

52. Onye-okē mere nde àbu ànwùrù èbu ākawa.
Great one that is the terror of them that trade in salt-petre.

53. Èlibe Àjà si ya ējè èje.
Elibe Aja said that he would go.

54. Nnām m Elibe Àjà, !turu.
Great father Elibe Aja set out.

55. Ya sō Arù-Oke-Igbò wèe jerua ogō wo.
He went with the people of Aro to their ogo.

56. Wo sī lèlè nkò anu ohù àzia àbia ēgbu mādù;
They said: look at the place from which that beast comes and devours men,

57. Ogbutugha mādù mà o fùghi ò gburu ewù.
Turning to kill our goats when men fell short.

58. Nnàm m Elībe Àjà je fu agū,
Great father Elibe Aja went and saw the leopardess,

58. Nna m Elibe Aja je fu agu,

Great father Elibe Aja went and saw the leopardess,

59. Ime ofya; !o mui nwa a mkpu.

Inside the bush, where it was nursing her cub in a cave.

60. Ya gwere ola nwanta ga-je !gbue anu,

It was with her great love for her cub that she came out to kill animals,

61. Ya abia gwere anu ohu !na-ajai nwa ya aka,

And returning to the cave, tore off and fed her cub with the limbs of her prey.

62. Na-ajai nwa ya anu.

Tore off and fed her cub with the flesh of her prey.

63. Elibe Aja gbagbuo nne agu ohu,

Elibe Aja shot and killed that leopardess,

64. Ya gbagbuo nwa o.

He shot and killed her cub.

65. Ya gwere anu-eri-ebulu gwere ni muoma Aru,

He took the body of the great devourer-of-rams and gave to them, Aro people.

66. E ru ahu, Aru gwere ya !ripue ezhe.

And in the course of the year they decked their royal throne with its skin for the first time.

67. O wu agu ohu Elibe Aja gbaa, oo nke wo ji eri ezie ma ugbua!

It is with the skin of the leopardess which Elibe Aja shot that they deck their royal throne till today!

68. Oo nke wo ji eri ezie ma ugbua!

It is with it they deck their royal throne till today!

69. Wo wu Aru-Oke-Igbo, igbe-Ekpe-anam-ete!

They, Aro-Oke-Igbo, unsifting-Ekpe-box-that-swallows-everything-indiscriminately,

70. Elibe Aja nwa-ugbom nta zia ali zo oto lua.

Elibe Aja, my dear little one, rose to his feet and returned.

71. Amurū nde-ugbōm ntà,

The people of Amuru, dear little ones,

72. Ebī-olà nà-àbia ubì à tana wō ofi.

A bush-hog was coming to their farms and destroying their crop.

73. Èlibe Àjà choro ebī-olà gari (ùwà) Amurù.

Elibe Aja went searching for the bush-hog and came to Amuru.

74. Ya nò hu okpukpu ebì-olà gbaa egbè,

Sitting inside a cave, he fired,

75. Ànwuru okū egbè gbue Elībe Àjà --

But the smoke from the gun choked and killed Elibe Aja.

76. Ife madu èmeta ikē bù yà lànì moo:

What a person does very well takes him to the land of spirits:

77. Eji m Elībe Àjà mara ife madū èmeta ikē bù yà lànì mon!

I know this from the fate of Elibe Aja, that what a person does very well takes him to the land of spirits.

TEXT 22 : INYAN OLUGU B1

1 Inyaṅ Oluguu, ogbu-etuwui-di-ya!

Inyaṅ Oluguu, killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband!

2 Oo Nne Inyaṅ Olugu, ogbu-etuwui-di-ya.

It is great-mother Inyan Oluguu, killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband.

3 O wu onye Amaeke Abam.

She is a person of Amaeke Abam.

4 Di ya egbughi isi.

Her husband won no head in battle.

5 Ya si ya ye-egbu isi ye-etuwui di ya.

She vowed that she would win a head in battle and give the honour to her husband.

6 Inyaṅ Olugu wu onye Eyen.

Inyaṅ Oluguu is a person of Eyen.

7 Oo nwa nwaami Eyen.

She is a young woman of Eyen.

8 Ya zhiari ibe ohu gaari Nkalu ekwu-Igbo-ekwu-nsu.

She set out from there and went all the way to Nkalu that spoke neither Igbo nor in stammer.

9 Ya fu akwu, di ya ye-egbui ya akwu ri ofia.

She saw palm fruits (and said) that her husband would pluck palm fruits for her from the forest.

10 Ya kuru di ya gaa ofia ohu.

She took her husband with her and went into that bush.

11 Di ya nwa-ugbom-nta nyigoro elu.

Her husband, my-dear-little-one, straddled up.

12 Ya nonwa egbu akwu, Nkalu ekwu-Igbo-ekwu-nsu biapua.

He was there plucking palm fruits when Nkalu people that spoke neither Igbo nor in stammer came upon them.

13 Inyaṅ Olugu were egbe di ya.

Inyaṅ Olugu took her husband's gun.

14 Ya gbagbua Nkalu ndi-ife ano.

She fired and killed Nkalu people, five men in all.

15 Da muo isi gbugbaa bia linyere ya abo.

And quickly chopped off their heads and packed for him (her husband) in a long-basket.

16 Ya si di ya weisa.

She said to her husband, 'Come down now.

17 'Go biko weisa.

'Will you please come down now.

18 'Ma wo laa.

'So we can set out for home.

19 'Ye ebgule Nkalu isi ano.'

'I have chopped off four heads of Nkalu people.'

20 Itenta Ogbulopia weisa.

Itenta Ogbulọpịa clambered down.

21 Itenta Ogbulopia, oo (....) Abaala.

Itenta Ogbulọpịa, he is (....) of Abaala.

22 Nwaanyi ohu wu Eyen Ezhiaku.

That woman is of Eyen Ezhiakụ.

23 Nne Inyaṅ Olugu wu Eyen Ezhiaku.

Great-mother Inyan Ọlụgụ is of Eyen Ezhiakụ.

24 Ya (....) kwaa abo.

She (dressed the head-trophies)* and packed them in long-baskets.

25 Bia dowenu di ya ikoro.

And she came and placed them for her husband in front of the ikoro.

26 Ya si di ya go asọnla ujọ.

She said to her husband, 'You have now escaped from the ujọ rank.'

27 Ikoro bia etu ya:

The Ikoro came to chant praises to him:

28 Itenta Ogbulopia!'

'Itenta Ogbulopia!' (Small-pot Killer-in-fiddling!)

29 Ya si e gbee ye etu.

But she said that they should not chant praises of him.

30 E tu Inyaṅ Ọlugụ, Ogbu-etuwui-di-ya.

Rather let them chant praises to Inyaṅ Ọlugụ, killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband.

31 Ogbu-awhoi-abọ, Inyaṅ Ọlugụ!

She-that-kills-and-packs-in-long-baskets, Inyaṅ Ọlugụ!

32 Ọọ ya wụ nwaami gbuu (....) di ya.

She is the woman that won heads in battle (and gave the honour) to her husband.

33 Ọ wụ onye Eyen.

She is a person of Eyen.

34 Nwanne (Ima Orie Ezhiaku).*

Sister of Ima Orie of Ezhiaku.

35 Ọ wụ Eyen mee tua di!

It is the lineage of Eyen that caused a husband to be extolled!

36 I maghụ ọ wụ Eyen mee tua di!

Did you not know it was Eyen that caused a husband to be extolled!

37 Umu (....), o wu Eyen mee tua di, ma Ima Orie!
Children of (....), it was Eyen that caused a husband to be extolled, they also brought forth Ima Orie!

38 Eyen Ezhiaku, Ima Orie Ezhiaku wuru nwanne ya nta.
Eyen, daughter of Ezhiaku, Ima Orie Ezhiaku is her younger brother.

39 Oo wo kpaa (....).
It was they that (kpaa....).

40 Ohafia unu kwewo!
Woo! (from the audience).

TEXT 23 : INYAN OLUGU B2

1 Inyaṅ Olugu wu onye Amaeke Abam wuru Eyen.
Inyaṅ Ọlụgụ is a person of Amaeke Abam and is also of Eyen.

2 Ogbu-etuwui-di-ya, Inyaṅ Olugu!
Killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband, Inyaṅ Ọlụgụ!

3 Nwa nwaami Eyen, Inyaṅ Olugu e!
Young woman of Eyen, O Inyaṅ Ọlụgụ!

4 Oke-nnwa nwa nwaami Eyen, Inyaṅ Olugu e!
Great daughter, Young woman of Eyen, O Inyaṅ Ọlụgụ!

5 Di ya egbughi isi, wọ na-eri di ya ji-ujọ.
Her husband won no head in battle, and so they exacted from him the penal-yam-for-cowardice.

6 Amaeke Abam wo la Nkalu ekwu-Igbo-ekwu-nsụ: wọ ji mmeta -
Amaeke Abam and Nkalu people that spoke neither Igbo nor in stammer, they were at loggerheads.

7 Nde furu umu wọ wo egbua!
Anyone that met his neighbour's children, killed them.

8 Inyaṅ Olugu turu di ya ura: gọ jee gbui ya akwụ ri a ofia Nkalu.
Inyaṅ Ọlụgụ lured out her husband: 'Please, come and pluck palm fruits for me, in the Nkalu forest.

9 Itenta Ogbulopia kwere ya je egbui Inyaṅ Olugu akwụ ri a ofia Nkalu.
Itenta Ogbulopia agreed to go pluck palm fruits for Inyaṅ Ọlụgụ in the Nkalu forest.

10 Ya daa egbe buru.

She found and slung on a gun.

11 Inyaṅ Olugu daa egbe ye di ya buru.

Inyaṅ Olugu found and slung on her husband's gun.

12 Ya suimbe mgbo ohu sui.

She charged and charged it full of gunpowder.

13 Ya buru uzo je zi ya di ya.

She led the way and went and showed it to her husband.

14 Ya je si di ya:

She went and told her husband:

15 'Go lele nkwu go ya-egburu ya.'

'Look at the palm fruits you will have to pluck for me.'

16 Di ya nyiri elu nkwu.

Her husband straddled up the palm tree.

17 O nori elu enyi nkwu.

He was there straddling up the palm tree.*

18 O nori enyi elu nkwu.

He was there straddling up the palm tree.

19 Nde Nnong-Ibibie choro ya bia.

Nnong-Ibibie people came in pursuit of him.

20 Inyaṅ Olugu nonwa ali gwere egbe gbairi nde Nnong.

Inyaṅ Olugu, who was on land, took her gun and fired at the Nnong people.

21 O gwerela egbe gbairi nde Nnong-Ibibie!

She has fired a gun at the Nnong-Ibibie people!

22 Ya gbagbuo nde Nnong-Ibibie nde ife ano.

She shot and killed Nnong-Ibibie people, five men in all.

23 Ya gbuugba muo isi gwere ni di ya.

She chopped off the heads of all of them and gave to her husband.

24 Ogbu-etuwui-di-ya, Inyaṅ Oluguụ!

Killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband, Inyaṅ Oluguụ!

25 Nwa nwaami Eyen, oo nne o ji gbue isi, ya gbui di ya aha.

Young woman of Eyen, that is how she won a head in combat, and she gave to her husband the glory of battle.

26 Inyaṅ Oluguụ gbui di ya aha.

So then, Inyaṅ Oluguụ gave to her husband the glory of war.

27 Onye Eyen Ezhiakụ, Inyaṅ Oluguụ e!

Person of Eyen Ezhiakụ, O Inyaṅ Oluguụ!

28 Nne Inyaṅ Oluguụ, ogbu-etuwui-di-ya!

Great-mother Inyaṅ Oluguụ, killer-that-gave-the-honour-to-her-husband!

TEXT 27 : NNE MGBAAFO A1

1 Onye olu na-aza Nne Mgbaafo.
A certain person was called Nne Mgbaafo.

2 O wu Aru-oke-Igbo.
She was of Aro-oke-Igbo.

3 O wu Okwura-Egbu-Enyi.
She was of the lineage of Okwura-Egbu-Enyi.

4 Nne Mgbaafo ohu, o meni ife eleghe onye oke.
That Nne Mgbaafo, she behaved very much like a man.

5 Di ya nwuuri Aru-oke-Igbo.
Her husband had died at Aro-oke-Igbo.

6 Nne Mgbaafo nogbaa isi mkpo di ya,
And when Nne Mgbaafo finished mourning for her husband,

7 Ya nogbaa isi mkpo di ya, nogbaa isi mkpo di ya,
When she finished mourning for her husband, finished mourning for her husband,

8 Ya pusa afia Ncheghe Ibom,
She came out to the Ncheghe Ibom market,

9 Ya pusa afia Ncheghe Ibom, ya zua akparaja, gbai o obuo.
She came out to the Ncheghe Ibom market, and there she bought a matchet and sheated it.

10 Ya zuo okpu agu ziechie isi.
And she bought a war-cap and put it on her head.

11 Ya gwere ogbogho zua egbe chani,
And she took some money and bought a dane-gun,

12 Yere ya o igu,
Put a sling on it,

13 Suchie egbe chani, gwere akaaraja gaa omumu mua, mma horo.

Charged the dane-gun, and took the matchet to a stone-sharpener, sharpened and caught it in the air.

14 Ya gwere okpu agu ziechie isi.

She took the war-cap and put it on her head.

15 Ya gwere egbe chani tukwasi ukurube,

She took the dane-gun and put it on her shoulder,

16 Si ya choje di.

And said she was going to look for a husband.

17 Ya choro di ohu pusa Uburu-Mgbalogu,

She went searching for a husband and came to Uburu-Mgbalogu,

18 Choo di o fughu.

Searched for a husband there but found none.

19 Ya jea pusanwa Afa-Okpo, choo di ofugu.

She went searching and came to Afa-Okpo, searched for husband there but found none.

20 Pusa Nde-Okpu-Ukaanyi, choa di o fugu.

Then came to Nde-Okpu-Ukaanyi, searched for a husband there but found none.

21 Ya pusanwa wo gi Nde-Isiawo-Akoli, choa di o fugu.

And she came to Nde-Isiawo-Akoli, searched for a husband there but found none.

22 Ya pusanwa Ugwu-Onyiri-Egbe, choa di o fugu.

And she came to Ugwu-Onyiri-Egbe, searched for a husband there but found none.

23 Ya je ri Nde-Anam-Elem-Ulu-Uma, fu onye aza Uduma,
At last she came to Nde-Anam-Elem-Ulu-Uma, and saw a person called Uduma,
Onye ukwu akaji.
Great one of Akaji.

24 Di Nne Mgbaafo, di ya omamgbe!
Husband of great mother Mgbaafo, her noble husband!

25 Nne Mgbaafo si onwa wu onye aza Uduma:
Great mother Mgbaafo declared: Here is a man called Uduma:

26 Oo ezi di! Oo onye Ikenga Ikom!
He should make a good husband! He is a man of Ikenga Ikom!

27 Wo luta.
And they got married.

28 Uduma aka gbughi isi.
Uduma had not yet won a head in battle.

29 Anyi gi Ohafia Udumezem bia e tuu ogu eje a Atatum.
But soon, we, Ohafia Udumezem, began to make preparations to go to war at Atatum.

30 Nne a Mgbaafo gwere isi ekere wua nri ni di ya, di ya ria.
Great mother Mgbaafo cooked a meal with ekere for her husband, and her husband ate.

31 Ya si Uduma onwa: Go je ogu!
And she said to Uduma: You must get prepared and go to war!

32 Go gbua go alua, ma go egbughi go alua.
Be not afraid to return whether or not you win a head.

33 Erua aha oduo go egburu, aha awughi olu.

You can always win a head in another war, for there are many wars yet to come.

34 Uduma turu Atatum gaje.

Uduma set out and went to Atatum.

35 Ya nohu eru Atatum eru,

He was still on his way to Atatum,

36 Atatum jikputo Uduma gbua!

When Atatum people caught and slew him!

37 E rua mgbe nde aha lapuu,

And when all other warriors had returned,

38 E rua mgbe nde aha lapuu,

And when all other warriors had returned,

39 Nde aha lapua,

And the warriors returned,

40 A Nne Mgbaafo hukoa, si ha ya chopusa Uduma di ya.

Great mother Mgbaafo shaking with fear came and told them she was looking for her husband.

41 Ya turu pusa ikega uzo,

She came to a place where two paths crossed,

42 Wo si o: Nne Mgbaafo, go nohakwara, Atatum wo egbule Uduma.

And they warned her: Nne Mgbaafo, please go back home in peace, for the people of Atatum have killed your husband.

43 Ya si o wughu ezi di ya ori.

She said that it could not be that good husband of hers.

44 Ya choo Uduma, o fughu Uduma.

She searched for Uduma, she could not find Uduma.

45 Nne Mgbaafo rua ulue hukoi,

Great mother Mgbaafo returned home shaking with fear,

46 Gwere egbe yee ukurube,

Took her gun and placed it on her shoulder,

47 Gwere akparaja turu ukwu,

Took her matchet and tied it to her waist,

48 Gaje Ama Achara.

And set out for Ama Achara.

49 Ya je ogo muo duga, jea Kamalu muo duga jagagbam, si Ama Achara:

She went and sat in their ogo, went and sat jagagbam before their Kamalu, and said to the people of Ama Achara:

50 Oo wo chida aha Atatum, ama ukwu!

It was them that took the lead in the Atatum war, great people!

51 E duru ya jenwa zi ya ibe di ya gaa ogu kwuto,

I desire to be taken to the place where my husband fell.

52 Wo si Nne Mgbaafo go anoghi mkpari, a di go efuhile.

They told great mother Mgbaafo not to play the fool, for her husband had been lost forever.

53 Ya si ya apughi meni.

She said she would not allow that to happen.

54 Ama Achara gbaa ikpu, duru mmadu ano duiri Nne a Mgbaafo.

Ama Achara people whispered together among themselves and chose four men to go with great mother Mgbaafo.

55 Wo duru Nne a Mgbaafo gaa Atatum Ibibia,

And they gook Nne Mgbaafo and brought her to Atatum in Ibibioland,

56 Si: Tee-nwa ibe di go bia-nwa ogu kwuto.
And said: Look at the place where your husband came to fight and fell in death.

57 Ya si muo laje: uka unuo a gwule.
She told them to go: Your part in this affair has come to an end.

58 Nne Mgba gwere jerua okpu osisi, je na-ebie aka mkpughuru.
Then great mother Mgba went up to a tree trunk and began touching a headless body.

59 Ya nohi ebie aka mkpughuru na-ele mkpughuru Uduma di ya.
As she was touching that headless body her eyes fell upon the headless body of her husband, Uduma.

60 Ya ti aka ukwu daa mma miri,
She clapped her hand on her waist, drew her matchet,

61 Gburu mkpuru osisi,
Cut out a branch from the tree,

62 Gwugbaa ali gwere mkpughuru Uduma wei.
And after she had dug a grave, she buried the headless body of Uduma in it.

63 Ya larusa ulue,
When she came back home,

64 O megi izu ato ya turu jee Nde-Ede-Uri-Aghara-Aghara.
It was not up to three weeks before she set out for the country of Them-that-splash-indigo-without-pattern-on-their-bodies.

65 Nne Mgbaafo turu.
Great mother Mgbaafo set out.

66 Ya rua-nwa wo gi Nde-Ede-Uri-Aghara-Aghara, wo gi Usukpam.
She arrived at the country of Them-that-splash-indigo-without-pattern-on-their-bodies, that is Usukpam.

67 Ya na-ele akpụ dimkpa ibe ọ ji egbe bịa nọọ.

Her eyes fell on one robust man sitting with a gun by himself.

68 Ya lee akpụ dimkpa ọrị buru, bukoo egbe biarua ili dị ya,

She fell upon that robust man and carried him together with his gun and returning to her husband's grave,

69 Si: Ọọ nke ya ji hụa dị ya ikenga huọ ibita.

Said: This is a fitting sacrifice to wash the right-hand of my husband and wash his left.

70 Ezi nwaamị wụ ife ukwu.

A good woman is a great thing.

71 Unu kwe wọ!

Woọ!

72 Ya gwere ewu gbusị ili dị ya ọrị.

And she sacrificed a goat on that her husband's grave.

TEXT 28 : NNE MGBAAFO B1

1 Mgbaafo!

Mgbaafo!

2 Onye Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi.

Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi.

3 Di ya gaa aha.

Her husband went to war.

4 O gaa aha Igbe Mmaku.

He went to the war of Igbe Mmaku.

5 Di ya agaala aha Igbe Mmaku.

So then, her husband went to the war of Igbe Mmaku.

6 Ya ruo izu ato, di ya lua - a luoghi.

Three market weeks passed, her husband returned - did not return.

7 Di ya a luoghi.

Her husband did not return.

8 Mgbaafo turu di ya, ya choro di ya gajepua aha Igbe Mamku.

Mgbaafo set out then in search of her husband, she sought her husband and ventured out to the war of Igbe Mmaku.

9 Mgbaafo choro di ya gajepua aha Igbe Mmaku.

Mgbaafo sought her husband and ventured out to the war of Igbe Mmaku.

10 Di ya aza Ndukwe Emea.

Ndukwe Emea is her husband's name.

11 O za Ndukwe Emea ma di ya.

That husband of hers, Ndukwe Emea is his name.

12 (....)

(....)

13 Wọ sị Mgbaafọ gọ ọluọ ọle?

They questioned Mgbaafo, 'Where are you going?'

14 Ya si ya chọje dị ya:

She said she was out in search of her husband:

15 Dị ya wụ ezhị dị:

Her husband was a good husband:

16 Ọ wụ ezhị dị ya luọ.

It was a good husband she was married to.

17 Ma ya afụghụ dị ya, ya arhadị ibe dị ya rhadị.

If she did not see her husband, she would rather sleep wherever her husband slept.

18 Ya ga-aga ọgọ muọ.

She went past their ọgọ.

19 Ya jewe mbelege mbelege bia ruọ Atạn.

She went boldly, boldly, came and reached Atạn.

20 Wọ ju Mgbaafọ gọ ọluọ ọle?

They asked Mgbaafo, 'Where are you going?'

21 Ya si ya chọsa ezhị dị ya Ndukwe:

She said she was out in search of her good husband, Ndukwe:

22 Ọ gaa aha Igbe Mmakụ, ọ luọghị,

He went to the war of Igbe Mmakụ, but he had not returned.

23 Ọọ ya fụ dị ya, ya aluọpuọ alua.

It was only if she found her husband would she ever again return.

24 Ma ya afụghị dị ya, ya arhadị.

If she did not find her husband, she would rather sleep.

25 O mee nde gbuu di ya, muo egbuo ya.

And she would dare whoever killed her husband to kill her too.

26 Ya jewe mbelege mbelege je aha Igbe Mmaku, ruta rue.

She went boldly, boldly, ventured out to the war of Igbe Mmaku, came and reached.

27 Igbe Mmaku wo ju ya, 'Go aza ni?'

Igbe Mmaku people, they questioned her: 'What is your name?'

28 Ya si ya aza Mgbaafo.

She said that Mgbaafo was her name.

29 Di ya aza ni?

'And your husband, what is his name?'

30 Ya si o za Ndukwe Emeuwa.

She said that Ndukwe Emeuwa was his name.

31 Ibe ori wo dokwe Ndukwe Emeuwa.

That place where they put away Ndukwe Emeuwa,

32 (....) ibe wo zokwe Ndukwe Emeuwa,

(....) where they hid away Ndukwe Emeuwa,

33 Wo je kutu Ndukwe.

They went and called Ndukwe.

34 'Go oluo onye?

'Who are you married to?

35 'Go oluo onye?'

'Who are you married to?'

36 'Minye go aza ni?'

'What is the name of your wife?'

37 Ya si o za Mgbaafo.

He said, 'Mgbaafo is her name.'

38 'Go aza gini?'

'And you, what is your name?'

39 Ya si ya aza Ndukwe.

He said that Ndukwe was his name.

40 'Minye go achorola go bia.

'Your wife has come in search of you.

41 'Go bia je fu minye go.'

'Come out now and meet your wife.'

42 Nde ohu, nde-ugbom-nta -

Those people, my-dear-little-ones -

43 Igbe Mmaku si e gbule nwaami ohu:

Igbe Mmaku agreed that that woman should not be killed:

44 (....)

(....)

45 'O zhiari ogo muo choro di ya bia.

'She has come all the way from their ogo in search of her husband.

46 'O zhiari ogo muo choro di ya bia.

'She has come all the way from their ogo in search of her husband.

47 'E gbee ye egbu!'

'Let her not be killed!'

48 Wo kuru di ya we nikwa Mgbaafo.

They took her husband and gave to Mgbaafo.

49 Mgbaafo kukwara di ya bia Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi weisa.

Mgbaafo took her husband in her arms and brought him safely home to Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi.

50 Nwata nwaami achowa di ya,

Yaa di!

51 Nwata nwaami achowa di ya,

Yaa iya!

52 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa di!

53 Nwaata nwaami achowa di ya,

Yaa iya!

54 Nwata nwaami achowa di ya,

Yaa iya!

55 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha!

56 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha di!

57 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha di!

58 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha di ya!

59 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha aha!

60 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha aha!

61 Nwata nwaami achowa di ya,

Yaa aha di!

62 Mgbaafo, o chowa di ya,

Yaa aha di!

63 O chowa di ya!

Yaa aha di!

64 O chowa di ya!

Yaa aha di!

....et al.

TEXT 29 : NNE MGBAAFO B2

1 Nwata nwaami!

Young woman!

2 Onye Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi!

Person of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi!

3 O za Mgbaafo Kalu.

Mgbaafo Kalu is her name.

4 O wu onye Eleghe Ofoka.

She is a person of Eleghe Ofoka.

5 Di ya aza Ndukwe Ema.

Ndukwe Ema is her husband's name.

6 Ya turu aha Nnong Ibibie.

He got prepared to go to the war of Nnong Ibibie.

7 Ya si di ya go gbee eje, go anighi anu okwu Ibibie e!

But she said to her husband, 'Please do not go, you know you do not understand the Ibibie tongue!

8 Nde Ibibie egbu ge egbu!

Ibibie people will surely kill you!

9 Di ya ruhaa uka gaa aha Nnong Ibibie.

Her husband spurned her words and went to the war of Nnong Ibibie.

10 Nde Ibibie daa di ya kea!

Ibibie people caught and bound her husband!

11 We doi ime ulue.

And they put him away in a house.

12 Wo tukputo yo okpoghoro.

And they locked him in with iron keys.

13 Mgbaafo Kalu lea di ya izu ato,

For three market weeks, Mgbaafo Kalu looked out for her husband,

14 O fughu di ya!

She did not see her husband!

15 Ya Kwapua!

She burst into a cry!

16 Ya daa egbe di ya turu!

She took her husband's gun and slung it on!

17 Ya daa mma di ya maa omu turu ukwu.

She took her husband's matchet and belted it with omu to her waist.

18 Ya si ya choje di ya Nnong Ibibie:

She said she would go in search of her husband at Nnong Ibibie:

19 Ma ya afughu di ya ya-anagh alua alua.

If she did not see her husband, she would never more return.

20 A maghi di ya-aluzi ya aluzi:

Where could one find another husband that could marry her so tenderly :

21 O lu ya alu umunne ya.

He married her and married all her relatives as well.

22 Mgbaafo Kalu turu Nnong-Ibibie.

Mgbaafo Kalu set out for Nnong-Ibibie.

23 Ya jewe mbelege mbelege jeruo aha Nnong-Ibibie e!

She went boldly, boldly, ventured out and reached the battle of Nnong-Ibibie!

24 Nde Nnong-Ibibie, nde-ugbom-nta, wo gbafu ya:
Nnong-Ibibie people, my-dear-little-ones, they quickly sighted them:

25 'Nwata nwaami, i mee agi buru egbe turu mma,
'Young woman, how dare you carry a gun and wear a matchet,

26 'Go obia ni ogo wo?'
'What have you come to do in our ogo?'

27 Ya si, 'O wuru unu egbule di ya,
She said, "If you people have killed my husband,

28 E gbuo ya-gi, ya chosa di ya!
'You might as well kill me too, for I have come in search of my husband!

29 Nde Nnong-Ibibie ju ya di ya a za ni.
Nnong Ibibie people asked her her husband's name.

30 Ya si, 'O za Ndukwe Ema!'
She answered, 'Ndukwe Ema is his name!'

31 Wo si o, 'O bia aha Nnong?' Ya kwere.
They questioned her, 'Did he come to the Nnong war?' and she agreed.

32 'Go oleleri mkpughuru wo gbuu egbu.
'Go them and search among the headless bodies of those we have killed.

33 'Go o jee lee a si di go a no hu.'
'Go then and see if your husband is one of them.'

34 Nke o bia wu mkpughuru ohu ya-akwagharia,
She went and turned over each of those headless bodies,

35 Nke o bia wu mkpughuru ohu ya-akwagharia.
She went and turned over each of those headless bodies.

36 Ya si di ya anoo hu ma onye olu wo.
She said her husband was not there at all.

37 'Unu amaghi ya huwara di ya ama:

'Do you not know my husband bears a mark by which I can pick him out:

38 'Mpa bu ya la apata.'

'There is a scar on his thigh.'

39 Wo gaa ja lea nde ori wo dowee ulue.

They went and searched among those men whom they put away in a house.

40 Wo loku Ndukwe Ema.

They called out to Ndukwe Ema.

41 Ndukwe Ema ya aza.

Ndukwe Ema, he answered.

42 'Minye go azhiala ogo unuo choro go bia!'

'Your wife has come all the way from your ogo searching for you!'

43 Ya si, 'Unuo ji agbu kea ya okpa,

He said, 'You people bound my feet with ropes,

44 'Ma a topurunu ya agbu onwa ya eje fu si o minye ya!

'If only you could undo these ropes, I will come and see if she is indeed my wife!'

45 'A topu ya agbu ya jee lea si o minye ya!'

'Unbind me from these ropes that I may come and see if she is indeed my wife!'

46 Wo daa ya agbu toa.

They made haste and unbound him from the ropes.

47 Wo kuru ya pusa ife ogo.

They brought him out to the light of their ogo.

48 Ya fu Mgbaafo Kalu, di ya fu ya.

He saw Mgbaafo Kalu, her husband saw her.

49 Ya si onwa wu miye ya!

He declared, 'This is indeed my wife!'

50 Nde Nnong-Ibibie wo gbaa ikpu.

Nnong-Ibibie people, they whispered together among themselves.

51 E gwere Ndukwe Ema ni Mgbaafo Kalu:

Ndukwe Ema was taken and given to Mgbaafo Kalu:

52 'Go okuru lajekwa ogo unuo -

'Take him and return to your own ogo -

53 'Ife merenu go onwere obi ike zhiari ogo unuo choro di go bia,

'Whatever it is that gave you so strong a heart to come all the way from your ogo in search of your husband,

54 'Ike di gi adi!'

'You are truly full of valour!'

55 Ya kukwara di ya ohu bia ulue wei.

She then took that husband of hers in her arms and brought him safely back to their house.

TEXT 32 : NNE MGBAAFO C1

1 Cheo, oke-okpa Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi!
Hurrah for the great cockerel of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi!

2 Onye-oke ikporokpo Nde-Ada-Ezema-Elechi.
Great one, ikporokpo of Nde-Awa-Ezema-Elechi.

3 Nwa Nde Dike okwara Agwu,
Offspring of the lineage of Dike firstborn son of Agwu,

4 Ibe a mu Ndukwe Emeuwa,
Among whom Ndukwe Emeuwa was born,

5 Nwa umu-ekwe-eri-ji.
Offspring of the-people-that-do-not-eat-yams.

6 Nwa Eme Ndukwe Emeuwa,
Son of Eme, Ndukwe Emeuwa,

7 O ji ezhi okpogho kpo o okpogho lusa Nne Mgbaafo bianwa dowe ulue.
He saved up a good sum of money, a very good sum of money indeed, and with it he married great-mother Mgbaafo and brought her home to his house.

8 Wo lohe ebi.
They went on living together.

9 Aha Isantum pu!
Then, the war of Isantum broke out!

10 Choo, Nna m Ndukwe Emeuwa nwa,
Straightaway, that great-father of mine, Ndukwe Emeuwa,

11 Ya daa okpome mukwara,
He quickly found his okpome and brandished it,

12 Ya daa ikwu-eri-abo ya bukwara:
And he quickly found his man-of-the-lineage-that-eats-two-at-a-gulp and slung it on:

13 O da mmon o da ochi,

Be it spirits or be it laughter,

14 O da mmadu o da akwa,

Be it humans or be it tears,

15 Ya turu aha Isantum gaje.

He got prepared and set out for the war of Isantum.

16 Nde muo alogbaalari aha Isantume!

A long time passed after his fellows had returned from the war of Isantume!

17 Nde muo alogbaalari aha Isantum!

A long time passed after his fellows had returned from the war of Isantum!

18 Nne Mgbaafo nna ya!

Great-mother Mgbaafo cried out aloud to her father!

19 Nne Mgbaafo di ya!

Great-mother Mgbaafo cried out aloud to her husband!

20 'Chee, nde a di mi?

'Alas, where is my husband?

21 'Nde aha alotaala ike!

'Most of the warriors have returned!

22 'Chee, nde a di mi?

'Alas, where is my husband?'

23 Wo si o di o luahe!

But people told her that her husband was on the way!

24 (....) Nne Mgbaafo lea anya ezhi di ya, o luaghu alua;

(....) Great-mother Mgbaafo looked out for the return of her good husband, but he did not return;

25 (....) Nne Mgbaafo, nwa nwa Nne Dike Okwara Agwu.

(....) Great-mother Mgbaafo, daughter of the son of the mother of Dike firstborn son of Agwu.

26 Nwa nde-eri-isi-anighe-eri-agba,

Offspring of the-people-that-eat-only-heads-and-never-eat-jaws,

27 Nwa nde-eri-isi-anighe-eri-agba.

Offspring of the-people-that-eat-only-heads-and-never-eat-jaws.

28 Ya daa muo egbe nara,

She went to them and took a gun,

29 Daa mma gwekwara.

Went and also took a matchet.

30 (....) Mgbaafọ fụ.

(....) Mgbaafọ saw / was seẹn.**

31 Nde-di-ike-eri-onwu.

Strong-ones-that-never-entertain-death.

32 Wọ ju, 'Gọ gajea gini?

They questioned, 'What are you searching for?

33 'Gọ gajea gini?

'What are you searching for?

34 'Nwata nwaami, gọ gajea gini?'

'Young woman, what are you looking for?'

35 Ya si ya chọjea di ya.

She replied that she was going in search of her husband.

36 'Di gọ ọ za gini?'

'Your husband, what is his name?'

37 Ya si ọ za Ndukwe Emeuwa.

She replied that his name was Ndukwe Emeuwa.

38 Nwa umu-ekwe-eri-ji.

Offspring of the-people-that-do-not-eat-yams.

39 'Nde eleghe gọ ji buru egbe buru mma?

'How is it that you carry a gun and carry a matchet?

40 (....) di go?

(....) your husband?

41 Ye si ye bu di ye ejeku:

She replied that she was going to meet her husband:

42 'Nde-aha aluogbaale,

'All the warriors returned a long time ago,

43 'O luoghu aluo.

'But he did not return.

44 'Ma ya je ruo ibe ohu.'

'Let me try and get to that place myself.'

45 Ye jere ruo.

She went on and got to that place.

46 Ibe ozu wusiri!

The place was strewn with dead bodies!

47 Nne Mgbaafo, ibe o rusa, ya kwaata ozu.

Great-mother Mgbaafo, to every spot she came, she pushed over and pushed over dead bodies.

48 Ibe o rusara ye shietaa ozu.

To every spot she came, she tugged and tugged dead bodies.

49 Nne Mgbaafo shiehaa ozu ohu,

Great-mother Mgbaafo tugged and tugged those dead bodies,

50 Ma o letu o ya-afu di ya afu.

To see if she could catch a glimpse of her husband.

51 Nne Mgbaafo ya eje eshie ozu ohu.

Great-mother Mgbaafo, she went on tugging those dead bodies.

52 Ya fu Ndukwe Emeuwa,

She saw Ndukwe Emeuwa,

53 Nwa umu-ekwe-eri-ji,

Offspring of the-people-that-do-not-eat-yams,

54 Ogbuu!

Killer!

55 Ya lokuo ye, 'Ezhi miye mi o, iyanga!'

He cried out to her, 'O my very dear wife, iyanga!'

56 'Nwa Ndukwe Emeuwa, di m ezhi di mi!

'Dear Ndukwe Emeuwa, my husband, my darling husband!

57 'Di alu mi alu ikwu mi!'

'Husband that cares for me and cares for all my kin!'

58 'O je gini?'

'What have you come to do?'

59 Ya si ya chosago o!

She declared that she had come in search of him!

60 Onwu gbukwaari nwata nwaami wo ye-eji di ye emere ezhi ikwu o.

Even if death had killed her (in this search), (it would have been no loss at all for her relatives) for they would find a loving next-of-kin in her husband.*

61 Ya si o 'Ndii isi?'

She then questioned him, 'Where is the head you won in battle?'*

62 Ndukwe Emeuwa si ye-egbughi isi.

Ndukwe Emeuwa said he won no head in the battle.*

63 Wo je zo nzo okpa ato,

They set out, and just three steps away,

64 Wo fu mmadu.

They encountered a man.

65 Nne Mgbaafọ para mma bia egbu ya.

Great-mother Mgbaafọ took up a matchet poised to kill him.

66 Nna Ndukwe Emeuwa si gọ gbakwa egbu:

Great-father Ndukwe Emeuwa told her not to kill:

67 'Gọ hapụ, ya ye-egbu egbu!'

'Keep away, I will rather kill him myself!'

68 Nwa umu-ekwe-eri-ji daa okpom ya tikwara.

The offspring of the-people-that-do-not-eat-yams quickly drew his matchet.

69 Ya gbuo ọ.

He killed him.

70 Ya gbupu ọ isi.

He cut off his head.

71 (....) Nne Mgbaafọ nwa nwa Dike okwara Agwụ nwa

(....) Great-mother Mgbaafọ daughter of the son of Dike firstborn son of Agwụ

72 Si di ya Ndukwe Emeuwa, 'Gọ mee gọ apai ya isi ọhụ, wọ laje.'

Told her husband Ndukwe Emeuwa, 'Give that head to me to carry as we now walk homeward.'

73 (....) Ndukwe Emeuwa si ya anigi apai gi isi:

(....) Ndukwe Emeuwa said he would not give her the head:

74 'Wọ gaje uzọ nwa,

'When we are on our way,

75 'Afụ nwata nwaami ebe ọpa isi, iye je!'

'What would people say when they see a young woman carrying a head!'*

76 Nwata nwaami para egbe churu di ya,

Iyee iye iyee je! Iye je!

77 Nwata nwaami para egbe churu di ya,

Iyee! Iyee!

78 Nwata nwaami para egbe churu di ya,

Iyee je! Iyeje, miye!

79 Iyeje! Iyeje!

80 Nwata nwaami para egbe churu di ya,

Iyee! Iye je!

81 (....) uwa chi.

(....)

TEXT 33 : NNE MGBAAFO F1

1 Unu kwee wo!

Woo!

2 Gi noga ndu bia alu nwaami, nwoke ocha,

When in the course of your life you feel you ought to get married, fair-complexioned man,

3 Luru obi-di-ya, obi-di-ya baa uru.

You are well-advised to get married to she-that-is-her-husband's-heart for she-that-is-her-husband's-heart is a great asset.

4 Gi luga nwaami, luko obi-di-ya, o baa uru.

You must not fail when getting married to get married to she-that-is-her-husband's-heart, it is a great asset.

5 Anyi bia akpa ububuo obi-di-ya:

We are here to tell the story of she-that-is-her-husband's-heart:

6 Mgbaafo a Kaalu,

Mgbaafo Kaalu,

7 O wu onye akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema.

She is a person of the patrician of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

8 I marale Nde-Awa akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema.

Of course you know Nde-Awa, the patrician of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

9 O wu Asaga, Asaga Ohafia.

That is Asaga, Asaga in Ohafia.

10 Oo ibe amu Mgbaafo a Kaalu.

That is the birthplace of Mgbaafo Kaalu.

11 Nwaami eme ife elege onye oke.

Woman that behaves like a man.

12 Onye kuu ya ni a nwaagbogho, mi Mgbaafo a Kaalu, Oo Ndukwe Emea.

Her nurse when she was a baby-girl, this Mgbaafo Kaalu, it was Ndukwe Emea.

13 Wo futara anya.

They were in love with one another.

14 E ru mgbe Ohafia Udumeze ji turu aha -

And so it was that once, when the people of Ohafia Udumeze were set to go to war -

15 Wo eturule aha, wo gaje aha Nnung Ibibia,

They were set to go to war, they were going to fight at Nnung Ibibia,

16 Ibe Ohafia kee aha ri a Nnung Ibibia.

Where the people of Ohafia were going to fight was all the way at Nnung Ibibia.

17 Ohafia Udumeze eturule aha,

And so it was that when the people of Ohafia were set to go to war,

18 Nna m Ndukwe Emea, oo ya luu Mgbaafo a Kaalu,

My great-father Ndukwe Emea, who was now married to Mgbaafo Kaalu,

19 Ya turu aha Ibibia gajea.

He too got prepared and went to the Ibibio war.

20 I mara Ohafia ni gaa aha mgbe ori,

As you will know, when Ohafia people went to war in those days,

21 E jerua, nde a lua, nde a anighi a lua,

When they got to the battle-ground, some people will fight and some others will not,

22 E gbua nde, nde gburi isi,

And when the enemy was overcome, and some fighters had won heads,

23 Nde akpa aha egwere wọ je ulue dowo.

The head-gatherers would pick them up and gather them together in a house.

24 Ọ wughị ya ni ya nde kpara aha

It was not the fighters that gave the heads to the head-gatherers

25 Nde a kpagbaa aha egwere ọ je ulue dowo.

For them to bring home and keep in a house after they had finished fighting.

26 E gbua nde ọhụ, nde ọhụ egburu isi lụa.

When the enemy was overcome, the head-gatherers would bring home the heads won in battle.

Uhu kwee wọ!

Woọ!

27 Anyị gị Ọhafịa Udumeze egbukwa wọ kpụrụ-kpụrụ lahịsakwa.

And so we the people of Ohafia Udumeze routed them (the Ibibie) kpuru-kpuru and came back home.

28 E ru mgbe Ọhafịa lapuu aha,

When the Ohafia people were returning from the war,

29 Nde akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema alapule aha -

The head-gatherers of Nde-Awa-Ezema were returning from the war -

30 E rua mgbe mgbaasị ẹ ji abịa,

And in the twilight of the evening,

31 Mgbaafo a Kaalu je isi uzo mai:

Mgbaafo Kaalu went and rooted herself by the side of their homeward path:

32 O chee di ya.

She was waiting for her husband.

33 O fughi di ya.

But she did not see her husband.

34 Onye Asaga o juu ndea di ya, wo asi o luahi.

Every Asaga warrior she asked about her husband replied that he had not returned.

35 Onye o juu wo asi o luahi.

Everyone she asked replied that he had not returned.

Unu kwee wo!

Woo!

36 O hi ibe o zhia, ya juga nde aha, nde aha luakoa, o fugu di ya.

That was how it started, she went on asking the returning warriors, until they all returned, but she did not see her husband.

37 Mgbaafo a Kaalu

Mgbaafo Kaalu

38 Nwanta nwaami lua ulue, nri adii ya eri, ya kpofuru elege usu.

The young woman came back home, but could not eat, and sat recoiled like a bat.

39 Nwanta nwaami kpoi akwa:

The young woman burst into a lament:

40 Okwa nta bee ose.

The bush-fowl echoed her cry.

41 Okuko tia mkpu.

The cock cried out aloud.

42 Nwanta nwaami bai ulue.

The young woman went into the house.

43 Ya si ma ya afughu di ya,

She said that if she did not see her husband,

44 Ya gajeri ibe ori di ya gaa aha,

That she would go to that place where her husband went to war,

45 Ya gajeri ibe ori di ya gaa aha,

That she would go to that place where her husband went to war,

46 E gbua ya egbuko di ya ma wo mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lutakwa.

That she should be killed if her husband had been killed so that when they reach the other world they would get married there all over again.

47 Nwanta nwaami banyi ulue.

The young woman went into the house.

48 Ya gwere mma di ya, ya gwere adparaja di ya fuoni.

She took her husband's matchet, and she took her husband's sword and put it in its scabbard.

49 Di ya ji ukpom gaa aha.

Her husband had gone to war with a farming knife.

50 Ya gwere mma di ya fuoni ulue, kenyiri ukwu.

She took her husband't matchet in the house, put it in a scabbard and tied it to her waist.

51 Gwere okara di ya kwata ike elege ndi-ikom,

Took her husband's okara cloth and wound it around her waist as men do,

52 Gwere okpu-agu di ya kpuchii isi

Took her husband's war-cap and covered her head with it,

53 Gwere mma-agu di ya turu.

Took her husband's hunting knife and put it on.

54 Ya buru egbe di ya ukurube.

She carried her husband's gun on her shoulder.

55 Ya si ya e ruri a Nnung Ibibie, muo gbuo ya muo e yekota a di ya.

She said she would go all the way to Nnung Ibibie, if they killed her, it would only bring her together with her husband.

Unu kwee wo!

Woo!

56 Ma ya mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lutakwa.

When they are reborn in the next world, they would get married all over again.

57 E ru isi awalaka atan preya akule.

It came to pass, and the bells for prayers began to toll.

58 Okwa nta ebele ose, okuko tia mkpu.

The bush-fowl hooted and the cock crowed.

59 Ya bia rua ogwe Asaga duga odi

She came out to the village square of Asaga and sat down there.

60 Nna m Ajadu Uma,

My great father Ajadu Uma,

61 Nna m anife akale m ike kpuu

(...)

62 Wo fu ya, wo mi ndi ikike Asaga.

They saw her, they, the braves of Asaga.

63 Ibe o duga, wo ju: 'O lee nwaami duga ibe ohu?'
Where she sat, and they asked: 'What woman is sitting there?'

64 Ya si: 'Oo Mgbaafo a Kaalu.'
She said: 'It is Mgbaafo Kaalu.'

65 'Onwa go kwaani okara nti buru egbe,
'How is it that you have donned okara cloth like a warrior and are carrying a gun,

66 'Oo gini kpasu gi iwe go gi nwanta nwaami?'
'What is it that has put you in this desperate state, you young woman?'

67 Ya si di ya gaa aha Nnung Ibibie, o luaghi aha.
She said that her husband had gone to the Nnung Ibibie war but had not returned from the war.

68 Ya cho ya gaje Nnung Ibibie,
That she was going to look for him at Nnung Ibibie,

69 Muo gburu ya yekota a di ya ma wo mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lutakwa.
Let them kill her as they had killed her husband so that they would be reborn together in the other world and get married all over again.

Unu kwee wo!

Woo!

70 Wo kpakpere ya uzo.
They opened the gates for her.

71 Nwa o nori ulue agba anu otugbu ali,
Her child was at that time alone in the house throwing himself on the floor like a hunter tracking a wild beast,

72 O ye nna ya elege ire.

And he gave his tongue to his father (in his grief).

73 Gaje, gaje, atughi uzo egwu,

While she went on and went on without being afraid of the road,

74 Ome-eleghe-nna-ya.

She-that-does-things-like-her-father.

Unu kwe woo!

Woo!

75 Mgbaafo a Kaalu, wo kpapere ya uzo.

Mgbaafo Kaalu, they opened the gates for her.

76 Ya baa wo omiiko mi ife ohu a gaa.

They were moved to pity by the nature of her mission.

77 Ya bia pusa Ugwu-onyiri-egbe.

She came out to Ugwu-onyiri-egbe.

78 Ibe a mu Ike kara-kara, nwa Ozi Ikele.

The birthplace of Ike the agile one, son of Ozi Ekele.

79 Ria Ndea Nwoke, ibe a muru Ibe.

In the land of Nwoke, birthplace of Ibe.

80 Ibe a mu Nna m Obasi Uduma Iko, ri Ikoriko Nde Echi Onanku.

Birthplace of my great-father Obasi Uduma Iko, who is of Ikoriko Nde Echi Onanku.

81 Ibe a mu Uduma Onwukwe,

Birthplace of Uduma Onwukwe,

82 O ji nkuma egbu isi.

He that chops off heads with stone.

83 Ya bia pusa Nde Ibe Aja,

Then she came out to Nde Ibe Aja,

84 Ibe a mụkota nde ikike,

Birthplace of numerous braves,

85 Bịa rua ogwe Akaanụ, duga ọdị.

Came to their village-square and sat down.

86 Wọ ju nwanta nwaamị ọnwa: Gọ bụ egbe turu mma, gọ bịa gini,

They asked the young woman: Why are you carrying a gun and a matchet,

Ọọ gini kpasuu gị iwe?

What is it that has put you in this desperate state?

87 Ya sị dị ya gara aha Nnụng Ibibie.

She said that her husband had gone to the Nnung Ibibie war.

88 Ọ za Ndukwe Emea, ọ luaghị aha.

He is called Ndukwe Emea, he has failed to return.

89 Ya chọ ya gaje Nnụng Ibibie, mụọ gbua ya yekọta a dị ya,

She said she was going to Nnung Ibibie. Let them kill her as they had killed her husband,

90 Ma wọ mụdasa uwa ọọụọ ma wọ lụtakwa.

So that they would be reborn together in the next world and get married all over again.

Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

91 Ya baa wọ omiiko, wọ kpakpere ya uzọ.

They were moved to pity, and they opened the gates for her.

92 Ya jehi nduruga nduruga

She went boldly boldly

93 Elege Akpan ji ewu.

Like an Akpan masquerade with a goat.

94 Ọ bụnwa egbe turu mma mị nwata nwaami Mgvaafọ a Kaalụ.

And she had a gun and a matchet, this young woman, Mgbaafo Kaalụ.

95 Ya bia pụsa Enini Ọwa Agụ.

Then she came out to Enini Owa Agu.

96 Ibe a mụ Nna Ogbuka Abalị.

Birthplace of great-father Ogbuka Abali.

97 Ibe a mu Nna Ogbuka Abalị.

Birthplace of great-father Ogbuka Abali.

98 Okporie Agwu, Eze ọ kpere ọ rịa-nwa Nde Amoogu Uduma Alị,

Okporie Agwu, High-priest at Nde Amoogu Uduma Ali,

99 Ya bịa ọnụ ogo muọ, duga.

She came to the approach to their ogo and sat down.

100 Nde Ogbuka Agbala wọ fu ya.

The people of Ogbuka Agbala, they saw her.

101 Wọ jupua: Nwanta nwaami onye ọ duga ibe ọ, ọ wụ onye?

They asked: You young woman sitting there, who are you?

102 Ya si: Ọọ Mgbaafọ a Kaalụ.

She said: It is Mgbaafo Kaalu.

103 'Gọ gị nwanta nwaami buru egbe turu mma, ọọ gịnị kpasuu gị iwe?'

'You young woman are carrying a gun and a matchet, what has put you in this desperate state?'

104 Ya si ya wụ onye akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema,

She said that she was a person of the head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema,

105 Di ya Ndukwe Emea gaa aha Nnung Ibibie, o luaghi aha.
Her husband Ndukwe Emea had gone to the Nnung Ibibie war but had not returned from the war.

106 Ya choro ya rua Nnung Ibibie, muo gbua ya yekota di ya,
She was going to look for him at Nnung Ibibie: Let them kill her as they had killed her husband,

107 Ma wo mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lutakwa.
So that they would be reborn together in the next world and become married all over again.

108 Ya baa woo omiiko, wo kpapere ya uzo.
They were moved to pity and they opened their gates for her.

Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

109 Ya jehi mgbeleke mgbeleke ya bia rusa a Nde Obasi a Nwankwo,
She went on boldly boldly and she came to Nde Obasi Nwankwo,

110 Ibe a mu Nwankwo Eke Ukwu,
Birthplace of Nwankwo Eke Ukwu,

111 Ria Nde-Oji-Oku oke,
That is Nde-Oji-Oku oke,

112 Ibe a mu Obasi a Nwankwo,
Birthplace of Obasi Nwankwo,

113 Ibe a mu Nna Onuoha,
Birthplace of great-father Onuoha,

114 Onuoha Ijeonwu, Eze Okpere o ria Aku,
Onuoha Ijeonwu, High-priest of Aku,

115 Ibe a mụ Chief Okpi, onye ikpe,

Birthplace of Chief Okpii, the judge,

116 Ibe a mụ Ndem Okpii,

Birthplace of Ndem Okpii,

117 Ibe a mụ Nkemakọlam nwa Nde a Njọku Uma,

Birthplace of Nkemakolam, man of Nde Njoku Uma,

118 Ibe a mụ Ọji a Kaalụ,

Birthplace of Oji Kaalu,

119 Ibe a mụ Oburu Ọji,

Birthplace of Oburu Oji,

120 Ibe a mụ mmọn eze-ikpe, onye Umụ Eze,

Birthplace of spirit and chief judge, person of Umu Eze,

121 Ibe a mụ Nna Egbe Okafọ,

Birthplace of great-father Egbe Okafo,

122 Ezi onye-oke ji mma egbu unwụ,

Venerable great one that kills drought with a knife,

123 Oji-mma-egbu-agụ, Egbe Okafọ.

He that kills a leopard with a knife, Egbe Okafo.

Unu kwee woọ!

Woọ!

124 Ya bịa afịa ukwu Nde Ọji duga noị.

She came to the big market of Nde Oji and sat there.

125 Ọ bunwa egbe turu mma.

She was still carrying a gun and a matchet.

126 Nde ikike Nde Ọji fepusa,

The braves of Nde Oji flocked out,

127 Nna Ekwelike wọ,

Great-father Ekwelike and others,

128 Nna Ochin a Nna m Udu fepusa,

Great-father Ochin and my great-father Udu flew out.

129 Nwanta nwaami, oo gini kpasuu gi iwe?

Young woman what is it that has put you in this desperate state?

130 Ya si ya wu onye adpa Nde-Awa-Ezema,

She said that she was a person of the head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema,

131 Di ya Ndukwe Emea gaa aha Nnung Ibibie.

Her husband Ndukwe Emea had gone to the Nnung Ibibie war.

132 O luaghi aha.

He had not returned from the war.

133 Ya cho ya gaje Nnung Ibibie,

She was going to look for him at Nnung Ibibie,

134 Ma muo gburu ya yekota a di ya, ma wo mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lutakwa.

Let them kill her as they had killed her husband so that they would be reborn in the other world and become married once again.

Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

135 Ya baa wo omiiko, wo kpapere ya uzo.

They were moved with pity and they opened their gates for her

136 Ya jerekwa mgbeleke mgbeleke

Again she went boldly boldly

137 Ya pusa a Nde Okeeke Ogboja,

And she came out to Nde Okeeke Ogboja,

138 Ya pụsa a Nde Okeeke Ogboja.

And she came out to Nde Okeeke Ogbaja.

139 Okirika e! Odu-Ohafia-eje-ogu!

E! Okirika, He-that-leads-the-way-when-Ohafia-is-at-war!

140 Ọ wụ ulue wụrụ a a ntuwe nwa Nde Okeeke Ogboja,

He that built a home and built a sanctuary for Nde Okeeke Ogboja,

141 Ibe a mụ Ochuuba nwa-nne ya,

Birthplace of Ochuuba his brother,

142 Nna m Okirika ya ra Ochuuba nwanne ya nta.

My great-father Okirika, he and his younger brother Ochuuba.

143 Wọ sị ya: Onwa gọ buni egbe turu mma?

They said to her: How come you are carrying a gun and a matchet?

144 Go wudi onye ole mba?

Of what patriclan are you?

145 Ya sị ya wụ mba Nde-Awa-Ezema.

She said she was of the patriclan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

146 Ọọ gini Kpasụdulu gị iwe gọ buru egbe turu mma?

What is it that has put you in such a desperate state that you are carrying a matchet and a gun?....

147 Ekweke Orieji, Ọọ m na-akpai olu m,

Ekweke son of Orie, I am putting in my voice,

148 Njoku a Mmaju nwa Nnaji Idika Ikpe.

Njoku son of Mmaju, son of Nnaji Idika Ikpe.

149 Wọ jupuo nwanta nwaami,

And so they asked the young woman,

150 Oọ gini me gọ buru egbe turu mma?

Why is it that you are carrying a gun and a matchet?

151 Ya si ya je Nnung Ibibie.

She said she was going to Nnung Ibibie.

152 Di ya aluaghi aha.

Her husband did not return from war.

153 Ya mee wọ omiiko, wọ kpapere ya ụzọ.

They were moved with pity and they opened their gates for her.

154 Ya jehi mgbeleke mgbeleke pusa a Nkalụ Isu Ogwe,

She went on boldly boldly and came out to Nkalu Isu Ogwe,

155 Ibe a mụ Oboma Nkachu nwa di anyi,

Birthplace of Oboma Nkachu of our matriclan,

156 Ibe ọri Ikpo nwa Orieji Awa bi.

Place where Ikpo son of Orieji Awa dwelt.

157 Anaghi egbu Nkalụ Egbu wọ wụ nwa di anyi.

No one has ever defeated Nkalu in battle, they who are of our matriclan.

158 Ikpo nwa Orieji Awa bi a Nkalụ.

Ikpo son of Orieji Awa dwelt at Nkalu.

Unu kwe woọ!

Woọ!

159 Wọ Uduma a Aka ye i wu akpaputa nde ikike wọ.

They, Uduma Aka, issued a proclamation and their braves were called together.

160 Wọ jụpụa: Nwata nwaami, onwa gọ biani onụ ogo wọ,
They asked: Young woman, why is it that you have come to our compound,

161 Go buru egbe turu mma, ọọ gini kpasu gị iwe?
Carrying a gun and a matchet, what is it that has put you in this desperate state?

162 Go ọ wu onye ole mba?
Of what patriclan are you?

163 Ya si ya wu Ohafia Udumeze,
She said she was of Ohafia Udumeze,

164 Ya zhia a Awa-Nde-Ezema.
She was from Awa-Nde-Ezema.

165 Ọọ gini meedulu gọ buru egbe turu mma?
Why is it that you are carrying a gun and a matchet?

166 Ya si di ya gaa aha Nnụng Ibibie ọ luaghị aha,
She said that her husband had gone to the Nnung Ibibie war but had not returned from the war,

167 Ya chọ ya gaje Nnụng Ibibie,
She was going to look for him at Nnung Ibibie,

168 Ya rua ma muọ gburu ya yekọta a di ya,
When she got there, let them kill her as they had killed her husband,

169 Ma wọ mụdasa ụwa ọduọ ma wọ lụtakwa.
So that they would be reborn together in the next world and become married once again.

Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

170 Wọ kpapere ya uzọ mi Nkalụ Isu.

They opened their gates for her, they, the people of Nkalu Isu.

171 Ya bia pusa Ikpe Ikoro Ngon.

Then she came out to Ikpe Ikoro Ngon.

172 Ibe a mu Nnoke Inyang wọ,

Birthplace of their hero Nnoke Inyang,

173 Ibe a mu Obasi Uko,

Birthplace of Obasi Uko,

174 Nna Obasi Ubọng wọ.

Their hero, great-father Obasi Ubong.

175 Wọ gi nde ikike Ikoro Ngon,

They the braves of Ikoro Ngon,

176 Obasi Ubọng wọ, Obasi Uke onye-ikpe,

Obasi Ubong and other, including Obasi Uko the judge,

177 Onye-ikike ikpe ikoro Ngon,

Brave judge of Ikoro Ngon,

178 Ndukwe Emeuwa di a nwaana di ya.

The very picture of her husband, Ndukwe Emea.

179 Nna umu Ukpọng wọ pusa,

The children of great-father Ukpong congregated.

180 Obasi Ubọng wọ pusa,

Obasi Ukpong and others congregated.

181 Wọ jupua nwanta nwaami:

They asked the young woman:

182 Onwa gọ buni egbe turu mma, oo gini kpasuu gi iwe?

Why are you carrying a gun and a matchet, what is it that has put you in this desperate state?

183 Gọ ọ wu onye ole mba?

Of what patriclan are you?

184 Ya si ya wu onye Ohafia Udumeze,
She said she was a person of Ohafia Udumeze,

185 Ya wu akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema, Asaga.
She was from Asaga, head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

186 Mgbaafo a Kaalu si muo di ya gahi ano izu,
Mgbaafo Kaalu told them that her husband had been away for four weeks,

187 O luaghi aha Nnung Ibibie uzo.
He did not return from the Nnung Ibibie war.

188 Ya gaje a Nnung Ibibie unu o duru gaje,
She was going to Nnung Ibibie, to which you led the way,

189 Eje gbua ya ma di ya.
Where her husband went and was killed.

190 Wo mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lukota.
But they would be reborn together in the next world and become married once again.

191 Wo duru nwanta nwaami rua ulue,
And do they took the young woman to the house,

192 Eje kpari uka.
To go and hold a conversation on the matter.

Song

193 Oke agu dowo egbe dowo mma,
Great leopard, drop your gun, drop your matchet,

194 Gi etere abia, abia akari utuo!
Come dance to the tune of abia, abia is very sweet!

195 Oke agu dowo egbe dowo mma,
Great leopard, drop your gun, drop your matchet,

196 Gi etere abia, abia akari utuo!
Come dance to the tune of abia, abia is very sweet!

197 Oke agu dowo egbe dowo mma,
Great leopard, drop your gun, drop your matchet,

198 Gi etere abia, abia akari utuo!
Come dance to the tune of abia, abia is very sweet!

199 Nwaami agu dowo egbe dowo mma,
Leopard woman, drop your gun, drop your matchet,

Gi etere abia, abia akari utuo!
Come dance to the tune of abia, abia is very sweet!

200 Ndukwe Emeuwa, anyi bia koo akuko nanyere ya ni.
Ndukwe Emeuwa, let us now proceed to tell our story about him.

201 Ubochi di akanaka.
There is still time.

202 Nna Uka Inyang wo apusale.
Great-father Inyang and others have now come out from their conference.

203 Wo ju nwanta nwaami: Go amara uzo Nnung Ibibie?
They asked the young woman: Do you know the way to Nnung Ibibie?

204 Ya si ya amaghi uzo, onwa wu ibe ya mambe uzo.
She said she did not know the way, that she did not know the way beyond that place.

205 Ibe ya mambe uzo wu Ikpe Ikoro Ngon.
That she did not know the way beyond Ikpe Ikoro Ngon.

206 Oo hi ibe o zhia, ya mee wo omiiko mi nde Ikpe,
That was what happened, and they were moved with pity, they, the people of Ikpe,

207 Wo bai ulue ni nwanta nwaami nri,
They took the young woman into the house and gave her food,

208 Ni ya mmai, waara ya oji.
Gave her wine, and placed kolanut before her.

209 Wo waara ya oji.
They placed kolanut before her.

210 Wo bia isi asato, ndiikom asato,
They chose seven heads, seven young men,

211 Wo buokpa muo egbe,
They gave them guns,

212 Wo gwere Mgbaafo a Kaalu dowo etite,
They placed Mgbaafo Kaalu in the middle,

213 Ano buru uzo, ano kwere azu.
Four men walked before her and four behind.

214 Wo du ya gajeni Nnung Ibibie.
And they guided her towards Nnung Ibibie.

215 Wo eburule uzo
And so they led the way

216 Wo duru Mgbaafo a Kaalu,
And they guided Mgbaafo Kaalu,

217 Wo rusa s Nnung Ibibie,
And they arrived at Nnung Ibibie.

218 Wo erusale Nnung Ibibie,
When they arrived at Nnung Ibibie,

219 Nde Nnung Ibibie lowo wo anya elege ibe efi elele onu.
Nnung Ibibie people stared at them like cattle staring at a ditch.

220 Efi ni jepura afai bia rusa onu ike ya o lowo anya.
When a cow comes out to the market place and sights a big ditch it just stops and stares.

221 Wo ele nwanta nwaami elege o ji turu mma, oo gini kpasuu ya iwe.
They were staring at the young woman, the way she carried a matchet, wondering what put her is such a desperate state.

222 Wo suiri Nde Ikpe Ikoro Ngon:
They spoke in their language to the people of Ikpe Ikoro Ngon:

223 Nwanta nwaami ohi unu o du, o biani gini?
That young woman with you, what has she come here to do?

224 Nde Ikpe Ikoro Ngon suiri wo
The people of Ikpe Ikoro Ngon replied in their language

225 Si: Unu o kee di o, unu o gbuu di o.
And said: You people took her husband, you people killed her husband.

226 Di o bia aha unu o.
Her husband came to your war.

227 O si o ga unu o gburu o yekota a di o,
She says that what is left now is for you to kill her as you have killed her husband,

228 Ma wo mudasa uwa oduo ma wo lutakwa, oo ife o bia.
So that they would be reborn together in the next world and become married once again, that is why she has come.

229 Ya mee a wo omiiko.
They were moved with pity.

230 O di ibe wo gbuu ndi-ife, nde wo ro muo alu aha,
There was a place where they had killed many people,
the people with whom they were at war,

231 Mkpughuru wo dikota o onu ogo.
Their bodies were piled together at the approach to
their village.

232 Wo si nwanta nwaami Mgbaafo:
They told the young woman, Mgbaafo:

233 Go jee le ibe ohi ekekota mkpughuru enwekwaghi isi.
Go and look at the place where bodies without heads are
piled together.
Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

234 Go fu mkpughuru a Ndukwe Emea
If you see the headless body of Ndukwe Emea

235 Go hokwara o
You can pick it out

236 Go ahapukwara wo anu.
But you must leave the remaining meat for us.

237 Nwanta nwaami je kpahata mkpughuru ebukwaghi is,
The young woman went and searched among the bodies
without head,

238 O fughi di ya, ya si muo di ya anokoghi.
She did not see her husband, and so she came back and
told them her husband was not there.

239 Oo ibe o zhia, ya mee wo omiiko,
That was what happened, and they were moved with pity,

240 Nde Nnung Ibibie kuru ya rusa ulue

The Nnung Ibibie people brought her to their home

241 Wo tupuo ulue ime ibe ori ekee nde akpaa ra aha,

They unlocked the house in which they had imprisoned those captured in the battle.

242 Wo gbape uzo,

They unlocked the door,

243 Wo kupusa onye mbu (....)

They brought out the first person (....)

244 Ya wuru Ndukwe Emea di ya.

And it was Ndukwe Emea her husband.

245 Ya kpokwani ifu di ya, kpoo ya ifu, ya banwua di ya:

As soon as she set eyes on her husband, set eyes on him, she went and embraced him:

246 'Oo gi wu onye m chosa?'

'Are you indeed the man I have been searching for?'

247 Wo gwere mma bia ya agbu okpa ra abuo too ya aka ra abuo.

Straightaway they (the Nnong Ibibie) came with a matchet and cut him free from the rope with which they bound his two legs and arms.

248 Wo gwere mmai fia ya okpa ilulu

and they poured wine on the bruises on his legs

249 Mi Nde Nnung Ibibie

They, the people of Nnung Ibibie

250 Wo gbutu tu kpakwa di ya aka,

And they spat into their hands and shook her husband's hand,

251 Wo si wo aka afutughi ibe nwaami gwara di ya imeri:

And they said that they had never before seen where a woman redeemed her husband in like manner:

252 Go kuru di go laje, oko anagi ako go, go wu ezhi nwaami,
Take your husband and go, without even a scratch, for you are a good woman,

253 Go kuru di go laje, oko anagi ako go, go wu ezhi nwaami.
Take your husband and go, without even a scratch, for you are a good woman.

Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

254 Elege nwanta nwaami ji kpalasakwa di ya aha ibe o gaa aha,
How a young woman redeemed her lost husband from the place where he had gone to war,

255 Oo onye akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema,
It was a woman of the head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema,

256 Ohafia Udumeze.
in Ohafia Udumeze.

257 Wo ejerela nduruga nduruga elege Akpan ji ewu
They went proudly proudly like Akpan masquerades with goats in their hands

258 Wo pusa Ikpe Ikoro Ngon.
And they arrived at Ikpe Ikoro Ngon.

259 Ikoro wo haa onu, ibe a mu Obasi Ubong
Their war-drum bellowed, in the birthplace of Obasi Ubong,

260 Ibe a mu Ukwa Inyang.
Birthplace of Ukwa Inyang.

261 Wo waara muo oji,

They presented kolanuts to them,

262 Lua mmai fia muo okpa ilulu yara di ya.

Bought wine and poured over the bruises on her husband's legs.

263 Wo ejerele bia pusa Ndon Itu Obom.

They went on and arrived at Ndong Itu Obom.

264 Nde nwadi anyi ohi

Those relatives of ours

265 Wo waara muo oji, ikoro haa onu.

They presented kolanuts to them and the war-drum bellowed.

266 Wo je a pusa a Nde Okeeke Ogboja,

They arrived at Nde Okeeke Ogboja,

267 Ibe a mu Nna Okirika di egwu,

Birthplace of great-father Okirika, the fearsome one,

268 Wo waara muo ojo, lua mmai ni muo,

They presented kolanuts to them, bought wine and gave to them,

269 Wo lua ikoro gbaa egbe.

They beat the war-drum and fired guns.

270 Wo je pusa Nde Oji Onu Oke,

They arrived at Nde Oji Onu Oke,

271 Nde Obasi a Nwankwo,

People of Obasi Nwankwo,

272 Ibe a mu Nwaawo Emeaba

Birthplace of Nwaawo Emeaba,

273 Wo waara muo oji

They presented kolanuts to them

274 Ibe a mu Nna Egbe Okaafo

Birthplace of great-father Egbe Okaafo

275 Onye-oke ji mma egbu agu,

Great one that kills a leopard with a knife,

276 Ibe a mu Emelike Onwuka

Birthplace of Emelike Onwuka

277 Nwaranta Nna m Uduma Idika.

(....) my great-father Uduma Idika,

Unu kwee woo!

Woo!

278 Wo waara muo oji, luara muo ikoro,

They presented kolanuts to them, beat the war-drum,

279 Luara muo mmai.

Bought wine for them.

280 Nwanta nwaami ya a di ya

Then the young woman and her husband

281 Ya pusa Enine Owa Agu,

They came to Enine Owa Agu,

282 Ibe a mu Ogbuka Abali

Birthplace of Ogbuka Abali

283 Ibe a mu Nna Agwu Okorie

Birthplace of great-father Agwu Okorie

284 Ibe a mu Okorie Abali

Birthplace of Okorie Abali

285 Ikoro haa onu, wo waara muo oji,

The war-drum bellowed and they presented kolanuts to them.

286 Ibe a mu Oji Iro Nde-Elu-Mmai.

In the birthplace of Oji Iro, people that trade in wine.

287 Wo bia pusa ugwu Onyiri Egbe

They arrived at Ugwu Onyiri Egbe

288 Ikoro wo ha onu,

Their war-drum bellowed,

289 Ibe a mu Ike Akanara nwa Ozi Ekele,

Birthplace of Ike Akanara, son of Ozi Ekele,

290 Nwa Nde-afoi-okpogho-abo, nwa Nde Agboke,

Man of the patriclan of them-that-stuff-long-baskets-with-money, man of Nde Agboke,

291 Ibe a mu Nna Ulu Oke,

Birthplace of great-father Ulu Oke,

292 Ibe a mu Okereke Uyo,

Birthplace of Okereke Uyo,

293 Ibe a mu Nna Ukwu Omezua.

Birthplace of great-father Ukwu Omezua.

Unu kwe woo!

Woo!

294 Wo lua ikoro, wo waara muo oji, lua mmai.

They beat the war-drum, presented kolanuts to them and brought wine,

295 Egbe suru nsu mmini, wo duru muo rua akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema.

Guns stammered with the stammer of rainclouds and followed them until they arrived at the head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

296 Ibe a mu Nna Eye,

Birthplace of great-father Eye,

297 Ibe a mu di omo-ukwe Ukpai,

Birthplace of the husband of Omo-Ukwu Ukpai,

298 Ibe ori nde ezi Omo-Ukwu zia bia,

The place from which came the kindreds of Omo-Ukwu,

299 Egbe na-asu nsu mmini,

Guns went on stammering with the stammer of rainclouds,

300 Wo nupua aha,

They celebrated victory in war,

301 Wo nupua nwanta nwaani, nupua di ya,

They celebrated the young woman and celebrated her husband,

302 Wo larusa ulue, nde umu nne ya gwere okiri gburua Ndukwe Eme di ya,

And when they returned to their home, her brothers cooked a meal with the meat of a he-goat for Ndukwe Emea her husband,

303 Wo gwere azuzu gbuara nwanta nwaami kpalasa di ya aha.

And they cooked with fish for the young woman that brought her husband home from the war.

304 Nwoke ocha,

Fair-complexioned man,

305 Elege nwanta nwaami ji kpalasa di ya aha,

That is how a young woman brought her husband home from war,

306 Ri a akpa Nde-Awa-Ezema.

To the head-gathering clan of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

TEXT 40 Amoogu C1

1 Amoogu Oloki Ikpo.

Amoogu son of Okoki Ikpo.

2 Onye-oke Umuma.

Great one of Umuma.

3 Nwa Ọhafịa Udumezema e!

Son of Ọhafịa Udumezema e!

4 Dududu ndufu!

Dududu ndufu!

5 Ikoro!

Ikoro!

6 (...) Ibisikpo.

(...) at Ibisikpo.

7 Onye-oke (...)

The great one of (...).

8 (...)

(...)

9 Ya nye Ọhafịa akwukwọ.

He sent a letter to the people of Ọhafịa.

10 'Unuọ biko biarianwa.

'Please, come and visit us in our home.

11 'Unuọ biarianwa.

'Come and visit us in our home.

12 'Nwa Ohafia Udumezema e!

'Children of Ohafia Udumezema e!

13 'Unuọ di ya mma.

'I am full of admiration for your people.

14 'Ya gbe afa unuo anụpụ.

'Long have I heard of your fame.

15 'Ya na unu abọ ye-eme enyi.

'I desire that you and I shall be friends.

16 'Unu ebu nganga bia ogo ya (...)

'You will come to our ogo laden with dignity (...).

17 E ru ubochi eke.

It reached an Eke market day.

18 E dui mmadu asaa,

A delegation of seven men was sent,

19 Nwa Ohafia Udumezema.

All sons of Ohafia Udumezema.

20 Ya bai uluo ọ makwara jịọji.

He (the host) went into his house and clad himself in a jịọji cloth.

21 Ya gbuo ọ tu eghu sete isi.

He killed a goat and presented (his guests with) its head.

22 Yọ gwere ugo turu.

He stuck an eagle-plume to his cap.

23 Wọ lua onye-aka-mkpuru Luuke.

They (the guests) were charmed by the graces of the-short-armed-one-of-Luuke.

24 Wọ dowe ji dowe mmai.

They served them yams and served them wine.

25 Wọ too ọji nuọ mmai.

They ate kolanuts and drank wine.

26 E wuoru wọ nri wọ erie.

A meal was cooked for them and they ate.

27 E je eru mgbe wọ ri tugbaa ife ọ,

And when they had finished eating that meal,

28 Wọ lapule.

They set out for home.

29 Wo tu nkoo wo kwe woo,

They swayed this way and they chorused surfeitedly,

30 Wo tu nkoo wo kwe woo.

They swayed that way and they chorused surfeitedly.

31 Ya na unu abo ye-eme enyi.

'I and your people shall be friends.

32 Wo ya awu ikwu.

We shall be relatives.

33 Wo na unu abo emeputa mgbei.

Our people and yours shall both share the secrets of manly excellence.

34 Onye-oke (...) duru muo rute agbata uzo abuo nwa.

The great one of (...) accompanied them up to a point where two roads crossed.

35. Onye-aka-mkpuru Luuke,

The short-armed-one-of-Luuke,

36 (...)

(...)

37 Ya gbuo nwanta ogo ya bia agbata uzo abo bia dowe,

He then killed a youth of his ogo, came to this place where two roads crossed and hid his dead body,

38 Ibe o dusara Ohafia Udumezema,

At the place to which he accompanied the delegation of Ohafia Udumezema.

39 Ibe o dowere mmadu ohu,

At the place where he had hidden that body,

40 Mkpughuru ohu.

That headless body.

41 Wo noi keletaa.

They stood there and greeted one another.

42 Ebulu ojii sei muo.

A black ram (he took) and gave to them.

43 'Unuo gwere laje.'

'You people take this with you as you go.'

44 Wo noi keletaa.

They stood there and greeted one another.

45 Onye-aka-mkpuru-Luuke,

The-short-armed-one-of-Luuke,

46 Yo lee anya nkoo, ya fu ọfia,

He suddenly flashed his eyes this way, he gazed at a bush forest,

47 Daa mkpughuru ọ tupusa.

And he quickly picked and threw out that headless body.

48 Ya tipua:

He cried out aloud:

49 'Ọhafia Udumezema e!'

'Alas, Children of Ọhafia Udumezema!

50 'Ndea nne ya ji mea unuọ nganga,

'How is it that I have honoured you people so lavishly,

51 'Si ife unuọ di ya mma,

'Saying that I was full of admiration for your people,

52 'Ya buru ebulu sei unuọ,

'And on top of all that, I have given a ram to you,

53 'Unuọ ruo ulo ezi unuọ,

'So that when you return to your homestead,

54 'Unuọ egwere ebulu ọnwa ni ọ;

'You would make a present of that ram to your people;

55 'Unuọ Ohafia Udumezema,

'But alas, you of Ohafia Udumezema,

56 'Unu gakwannu ga-aga,

'As you people pass by on your way home,

57 'Unu alapula ala,

'As you make your way homewards,

58 'Unuọ egbuo nwanta ogo ya gwere isi ọ:

'You murder and chop off the head of a youth of my ogo:

59 'Unu amagh ọ iwe alagh ala!'

'Do you not know that this is provocation that cannot be healed!'

60 Nwa Ohafia Udumezema, muo gopuo mkpa n'aka.

Children of Ohafia Udumezema, with nothing in their hands, denied the charge in vain.

61 Wọ ejighi mma.

They had no matchet.

62 Wọ ejighi egbe.

They had no gun.

63 'Ndii ife wọ jikwani gbuo ọ?'

'With what then could we have killed him?'

64 Onye-aka-mkpuru-Luuke

But the-short-armed-one-of-Luuke

65 Ti aka tikwara okpome,

Clapped his scabbard, drew his matchet,

66 Gbuo wọ madu ato.

And killed them, three men in all.

67 Madu ano lua,

Four men returned,

68 Bia ofia lua.

Came through the bush and returned.

69 Bia si Ohafia Udumezema:

Came and reported to Ohafia Udumezema:

70 'Lele aga wo unuo dui wo (...)

'Witness the outcome of the mission you sent us to undertake (...)

71 '(...) Lekwa nne o ji mea,

'(...) This is how it happened,

72 'Muo gbuo wo!'

'And so, they slaughtered us!'

73 Onye banye ulo ya,

Everyone (that heard the news) when he returned to his house,

74 Ya mupue okpome.

He began to sharpen his okpome.

75 Ya banye ulo ya, o meziekwari aka mkpuru ya.

When he returned to his house, he dressed again the hands to his protecting charm.

76 Wo jepua.

They rushed about.

77 Chi aboola ututu.

When divine light returned at dawn,

78 Onye ji egbe (...)

Those who had guns (slumg them on)*,

79 Onye ji okpome eturukwale.

Those who had okpome belted them on.

80 Wo ga-aga

They set out and went on and on

81 Aka-mkpuru-Luuke

(Towards) the-short-arms-of-Luuke.

82 Nwa Ohafia Udumezema,

Children of Ohafia Udumezema,

83 Jee rua.

They journeyed on and arrived.

84 Ye egbugbuo muo,

But he (the short-armed-one-of-Luuke) routed them,

85 Gbuo muo, nde ohu luo.

Defeated them, those men returned.

86 Wo turukwa (...) gaa.

They prepared again (...) and went.

87 Ya gbukwaa muo oduo.

Again he routed them as he had done before.

88 Nwa Ohafia Udumezema, wo kpotu Ogodo.

Children of Ohafia Udumezema, they sent and summoned Ogodo.

89 (...)

(...)

90 Ogodo rusa.

Ogodo arrived.

91 Muo gwesa nkita.

They should bring a dog (he said).

92 (...)

(...)

93 (...)

(...)

94 (...)

(...)

95 E dui mmadu abo,

Two persons were sent,

96 Ofia.

Into the forest.

97 E je (...)

Some people went (...)

98 (...)

(...)

99 Madu abo gagari ofia.

The two men travelled on and on towards the forest.

100 Mgbe ha ruo ofia ohu,

When (at last) they reached that forest,

101 (...)

(...)

102 Nwa Ogodo,

Dear Ogodo,

103 Dibia na mba (...) si:

Priest diviner in the country of (...) said:

104 'O di ife olu ya acho:

'There is one thing I want:

105 'Onye ya-ano odu-ijere asui egbe

'Who among you can sit in a nest of soldier-ants and charge guns

107 (...)

(...)

108 (...)

(...)

109 (...)

(...)

110 Okosi-eri-aja,

Mighty-tree-that-cannot-be-appeased-by-sacrifice,

111 Nwa-oke Ohafia Udumezema.

Great son of Ohafia Udumezema.

112 Ya jere rusa,

He set out and arrived,

113 Bai odu-ijere nwa.

Entered the nest of soldier-ants.

114 Wo ni ya egbe, egbe adighi ya asui.

They gave a gun to him, but he had no power to charge the gun.

115 (...)

(...)

116 (...)

(...)

117 Ya jere rusa.

He set out and arrived.

118 A ni ya egbe, egbe adighi ya asui.

A gun was given to him, but he had no power to charge the gun.

119 Wo bia Ujuru -

They came to Ujuru -

120 Ujuru-kpoke-ndi-a-Mgbo-enini,

Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,

121 Lee Nna m (...)

Looked for my great-father (...)

122 Ya jere rusa

He set out and arrived.

123 A ni ya egbe, egbe adighi ya asui.

A gun was given to him, but he had no power to charge the gun.

124 Wo gaje (...) Ikuku,

They went out again (and looked for)* Ikuku (Wind),

125 Mba-ji-Kamalu-eje-ogu.

of the-nation-that-go-to-war-with-the-god-of-Thunder.

126 Ya rusa

He arrived.

127 A ni ya egbe, egbe adighi ya asui.

A gun was given to him, but he had no power to charge the gun.

128 Nwa Ohafia Udumezema,

Children of Ohafia Udumezema,

129 Wo rekwapua:

They burst into a flaming rage:

130 'E-ee! ee! E-ee!

'E-ee! ee! E-ee!

131 'Nde ne ayi ye-eme?

'What shall we do now?

132 'Iyee-je! Iyee-je!

'Iyee-je! Iyee-je!

133 'Iye-je! Iye-je!'

'Iye-je! Iye-je!'

134 Wo gajaa!

They went on trying.

135 Umu (...) uwa oma,

Children (...) of good fortune,

136 Odu-nne-ya-alu-ogu.

He-that-goes-to-war-with-his-mother.

137 Wo jere ruo Ikpo.

They set out and approached Ikpo.

138 Yo bai odu-ijere nwa, egbe adii ya asui.

He entered that same nest of soldier-ants, but he had no power to charge the gun.

139 Wo pusa,

They came out again,

141 (...) nwa Abia-Eteete,

(...) son of Abia-Eteete,

142 (...)

(...)

143 Wo lee Nna m Akwu.

They looked for my great-father Akwu.

144 (...)

(...)

145 (...)

(...)

146 Ya rusa odu-ijere nwa,

He got to the nest of soldier-ants,

147 A ni ya egbe, egbe adighi ya asui.

A gun was given to him, but he had no power to charge the gun.

148 Wo rekwapua:

They burst into a flaming rage:

149 'Nwa Ohafia Udumezema,

'Children of Ohafia Udumezema,

150 'O wu ayi ye-eje ole ibe?'

'Where now, to what place now shall we go?'

151 Wo rusa

They came to

152 Nwa okporokpo Nde-Awa-Ezema,

The charming okporokpo of Nde-Awa-Ezema,

153 Umu (...)

Of the lineage of (...)

154 Mba (...)

Nation of (...)

155 Oo (...)

That is (...)

156 Wo lokuo Nna m Awa Igbun,

They cried out to my great-father Awa Igbun,

157 Nwa okporokpo Nde-Awa-Ezema.

The charming okporokpo of Nde-Awa-Ezema.

158 Yo bai odu-ijere.

He entered the nest of soldier-ants.

159 A ni ya egbe, egbe adii ya asui.

A gun was given to him, but he had no power to charge the gun.

160 Wo (...)

They (...)

161 (...)

(...)

162 (...)

(...)

163 Choo! Asaga kwenu!

Choo! Asaga, give me audience!

164 Audience: Woo!

165 (...)

(...)

166 Ya jerusa odu-ijere,

He set out and got to the nest of soldier-ants,

167 Egbe adii ya asui.

But he had no power to charge the gun.

168 (...)

(...)

169 (...)

(...)

170 (...)

(...)

171 (...)

(...)

172 Wo loku Nna m Ebi.

They called out to my great-father Ebi.

173 Ya jere rusa,

He set out and arrived,

174 Bai odu-ijere nwa, egbe adii ya asui.

Entered the nest of soldier-ants, but he had no power to charge the gun.

175 Wo tipua.

They burst into a cry.

176 Nna m ebi ohu,

That great-father of mine, Ebi,

177 Ya na Amoogu bia achu mgwuru.

He and Amoogu went out once in pursuit of a lizard.

178 Wo ji ya eje nta.

They hoped to go ahunting with it.

179 A ni wo agaje nta ohu nwa,

As they were on their way to that hunting trip,

180 Nwa Amoogu bagide mgwuru (...)

This clever man, Amoogu, caught a lizard (...)

181 A choje o!

They should go and look for him!

182 Ma orovuru uwa chi.

(----)

183 Wo ochosa ya!

They came looking for him!

184 (...)

(...)

185 Umuma.

At Umuma.

186 We jere rua.

They set out and reached.

187 Amoogu ga ubi.

Amoogu was on his way to the farm.

188 Oloki Ikpo.

(Son of) Oloki Ikpo.

189 Wo noi chetu ya.

They sat down awhile and waited for him.

190 (...)

(...)

191 Amoogu jere rusa.

Amoogu set out and arrived,

192 Buru egbe dowe.

Put aside his gun.

193 E! ya daa mma ya dowe,

E! and he put aside his matchet,

194 Wo si ya, 'Ohafia Udumezema'.

They told him, '(We represent) Ohafia Udumezema'.

195 Choo!

Attention now! (to the audience)

196 Audience: Yaa!

197 Amoogu ritugbaa rhi.

Amoogu settled down first and had a meal.

198 Ya da okpom ya gwekwara.

He searched out his okpom and took it.

199 Ya daa egbe bukwere.

He searched out his gun and carried it.

200 (...)

(...)

201 (...)

(...)

202. (...)

(...)

203. 'Oo gini ji ya?'

'What is it that is holding you up?'

204. Wo si wo acho onye ya-abai odu-ijere asui egbe nwa,

They said they were looking for a person that would enter a nest of soldier-ants and charge this gun,

205. Wo turu aha gaa wo je gbuo muo lua (...)

So they could get prepared and set out for war, so they would go and conquer them and return.

206. Amoogu Oloki Ikpo,

Amoogu son of Oloki Ikpo,

207. Wo buru egbe ga-aga.

They carried a gun, went by.

208. Amoogu bai odu-ijere,

Amoogu got into the nest of soldier-ants,

209. Sui egbe mgbe mbu, ya nara,

Charged a gun the first time, someone took it,

210. Sui egbe mgbe abo, ya nara,

Charged a gun the second time, someone took it,

211. Sui egbe mgbe ato, ya ni muo,

Charged a gun, the third time, he gave to them,

212. Sui egbe mgbe ano, ya ni muo.

Charged a gun, the fourth time, he gave to them.

213. Nwa Ohafia Udumezema,

Children of Ohafia Udumezema,

214. Wo tu nkoo wo wee wo,

They swayed this way and they chorused joyfully,

215. Wo tu nkoo wo kwee wo,

They swayed this way and they chorused joyfully.

216. 'Oloki Ikpo go o pusa.

'(Son of) Oloki Ikpo, come out now.

217. 'Go emekwarale wo ife dum nwa!'

'You have done for us everything we asked for!'

218. Wo turu aha ohu gaje (...)

They got prepared and set out again for that war (...)

219. Amoogu si a nye ye egbe ma ya suiga.

Amoogu told them to give him another gun to charge.

220. Wo ya yo-o pusa.

They told him that he should come out.

221. (...)

(...)

222. Amoogu rusa ulue.

Amoogu returned to his house.

223. Onye okpom ya adighi nko ya mupue okpom.

Now, everyone whose okpom was not sharp, sharpened his okpom.

224. (...)

(...)

225. (...)

(...)

226. (...)

(...)

227. Wo turu aha ohu gaa ga.

They got prepared and set out for that war.

228. Wo jeruo a Liike.

They went and arrived at Liike.

229. Amoogu (...)

Amoogu (...)

230. Wo baigbaale (...)

When they had all entered (...)

231. Wo gbupuo muo.

They massacred them.

232. (...)

(...)

233. Ma apa-apa ma eshie-eshie,

Both suckling babes and toddling kids,

234. Ma ezhi ezhie nwaami.

And even queenly old women.

235. Amoogu Oloki Ikpo,

Amoogu son of Oloki Ikpo,

236. Oo ya gbu-o onye-aka-mkpuru-Liike.

It was him that killed the-short-armed-one-of-Liike.

237. Nwa Amoogu (...)

Admirable Amoogu (...)

238. (...)

(...)

239. Choo! Amooji kwenu!

Choo! Amooji, give me audience!

240. Audience: Woo!

241. Oloki Ikpo, Oo ya gbuu onye-aka-mkpuru-Liike.

Son of Oloki Ikpo, it was him that killed the-short-armed-one-of-Liike.

242. Wo bia fu ya.

They assembled to meet him.

243. (...)

(...)

244. (...)

(...)

245. (...)

(...)

246. (...)

(...)

247. (...)

(...)

248. (...)

(...)

249. (...)

(...)

250. (...)

(...)

251. (...)

(...)

252. (...)

(...)

253. Wo lapule ala,

When they came back home,

254. Nne ya Orieji,

His mother, Orieji,

255. Ya bu ebulu bia onu ogo wo ori bia dowe.

She took a ram with her, came to the main approach to their ogo and tethered it there.

256. O ne-eche Amoogu Oloki Ikpo,

She waited there for the return of Amoogu son of Oloki Ikpo,

257. Ebughi-uzo-aha-ejeghi.

War-leader-without-whom-there-is-no-forward-march,

258. Nde-aha alogbaale.

Most of the warriors had now returned.

259. Enyi Amoogu aluoale.

Amoogu's bosom friend had returned.

260. Nne m Orieji rusa uluo e!

My great-mother Orieji came to his house!

261. Ya jere rusa:

She went and arrived:

262. Nne m Orieji si enyi Amoogu,

My great-mother Orieji said to Amoogu's friend,

263. 'O wuru muo egbule o (...)

'If the truth is that theyhave murdered him (...)

264. 'Ma ya mara,

'Let me know,

265. 'Ma ya gbekwa akwa.'

'That I may stop weeping.'

266. Ya ruo, rusa ulue.

She reached, arrived at his house.

267. Ya zipuo o:

And he revealed to her:

268. 'Muo egbule Amoogu.

'They have indeed killed Amoogu.

269. 'Ye ekweghi

'I did not consent

270. 'Egbuo o (...)

'That he should be killed (...)

271. (...)

(...)

272. 'Ya ruo ha ekwere,

'It reached, and they agreed,

273. (...)

(...)

274. (...)

(...)

275. 'Me egbuo o.

'When he might have been killed.

276. 'Ma wo egbughu Amoogu,

'If they did not kill Amoogu,

277. 'Onye luru eleghe nwaami,

'Anyone of them that, for instance married a wife,

278. 'Oloki Ikpo!

'It would have been for the son of Oloki Ikpo!

279. 'Onye koo ji koori Amoogu!'

'Anyone that planted yams would have planted them for Amoogu!'

280. 'Wo pusa agbata uzo abo.

'They came to a point where two roads crossed.

281. 'Amoogu ka noori a azu.

'Amoogu was then still way back in the rear.

282. 'Wo gbaa ikpu:

'They whispered among themselves:

283. (...)

(...)

284. Amoogu jere rusa, o kpa onye ndu.

Amoogu set out and arrived, he had a live captive.

285. Wo si ya go-o buru uzo ma wo laje.

They told him to lead the way as they marched homewards.

286. Amoogu (...)

Amoogu (...)

287. 'Unuo je ma wo laje.'

'Go on, you people, let us march homewards.'

288. Wo si Amoogu, 'go ebughu uzo (...).'

They told Amoogu, 'If you do not lead the way (...).'

289. Amoogu lee ha uzo buru.

Amoogu agreed and led the way.

290. Amoogu buru uzo.

Amoogu led the way.

291. Wo chita okpi,

They gathered clubs,

292. Tiga Amoogu tituo ya,

Clubbed and clubbed Amoogu until they clubbed him down,

293. Daa ya isi nara,

They quickly took his head,

294. Daa ya isi gbukwara!

And they also quickly chopped off his head!

295. Buru isi ya ni (...),

And they took his head and gave (...),

296. Muo-o gwere isi ohu laje.

That they should take that head with them and go.

297. (...)

(...)

298. Nwa Nne m Orieji,

Son of my great-mother Orieji,

299. (...)

(...)

300. Wo rekwapua.

They burst into a flaming rage.

301. (...)

(...)

302. Ya metugbaare o ogwu:

He (Amoogu's friend) then settled down and prepared a charm for her:

303. 'Chi boo ututu,

'When divine light breaks at dawn,

304. 'Go-o kwapua.

'You should burst out crying.

305. 'Akwu-o nonwa onu ogo unuo.

'There is a silk cotton tree at the main approach to your ogo.

306. 'Nkwo no-ebei yo-o.

'Hawks often perch there.

307. 'O bi ebunara yo okuko.

'They live by preying on your domestic fowls.

308. 'Asi Amoogu nonwa ndu,

'If Amoogu were still alive,

309. 'E-e!

'Alas!

310. 'O wu o gbutua akwu,

'He would have cut down the silk cotton tree,

311. 'E-e, o wu o gbagbuori nkwo ohu,

'Indeed, he would already have shot dead those hawks,

312. 'Me egbe.

'And kites.

313. '(...) ye enwekwagho okuku!

'(...) I no longer have any domestic fowls!

314. 'Ye enwekwagho onye ya-akpoi ya okara:

'I no longer have anyone that would buy me okara cloth:

315. 'Amoogu anokwagh!'

'Amoogu is no longer there!'

316. Wo tipua:

They cried out:

317. 'Ulue ya akahigbaale.

'The roof of her house are now in tatters.

318. 'Wo bia gbairi ya oturu ulue.

'She is asking us to come and put new raffia mats in the roof.

319. 'Wo ye-egbutu akwu,

'And we shall cut down the silk cotton tree,

320. 'mu nde uke ya.

'We that are of her son's age-group.

321. (...) Amoogu Oloki Ikpo.

(...) Amoogu son of Oloki Ikpo.

322. (...) aka ukwu.

(...) great hands.

323. Che ya isi nkoo, che ya isi nkoo.

Pointed it this way, pointed it that way.

324. (...)

(...)

325. Mgbe ohu wo eje ubi,

That time, they were going to the farm,

326. Kwa ututu.

Every morning.

327. (...)

(...)

328. (...)

(...)

329. Ogwu ohu tu wo

They came under the power of that charm.

330. Wo lua ahu gbupua akwu ohu.

In the course of time, they began to cut down that silk cotton tree.

331. (...)

(...)

332. Ye etipua:

She burst out crying:

333. 'Amoogu Oloki Ikpo,

'Amoogu son of Oloki Ikpo,

334. 'Asi o no ndu,

'If he were still alive,

335. 'Akwu onwa egbute,

'This silk cotton tree now being cut down,

336. 'O wu (...) ya ulue.

'It would not (as it now does, sway to crash upon) my house.

337. 'Onye ye-ewukwara yu ulue odo,

'Who would build another house for her,

338. 'Lei Amoogu?

'Like that built by Amoogu?

339. 'Iyee!

'Iyee!

340. 'Iye-je! Iye-je!

'Iye-je! Iye-je!

341. 'E! Onye ewuru ulo m ee!

'E! Who would build my house for me!

342. 'Iye-je!

'Iye-je!

343. Chee! Ohafia kwenu!

Chee! Ohafia, give me audience!

344. Audience: Woo!

345. Wo ruo (...)

They reached (...)

346. Ma mma.

And matchets.

347. Gbugha akwu.

They went on cutting the silk cotton tree.

348. Akwu adapule.

The silk cotton tree was now about to fall.

349. Nne ya ma Amoogu,

Then his mother, that is, of Amoogu,

350. Nne o Orieji,

His mother, Orieji,

351. Kwapukwa:

Cried out again:

352. (...)

(...)

353. 'Asi Amoogu no ndu nwa,

'If amoogu were still alive,

354. 'O wu oho akwu onwa aka!'

'He would have caught up this silk cotton tree in hia hands

355. Ndi-uke yo si wo ye-eme ye eme.

The members of his age-group said they were prepared to do as he would have done.

356. Wo no nwa!

They were there!

357. (...)

(...)

358. (...)

(...)

359. Wo gwere aka che yo (...)

They spread out their arms to catch it up (...)

360. Akwu dagbusie wo.

But the silk cotton tree crashed upon them and killed them all.

361. Oo ya mee wo ha nne ohu.

That is the reason why they are as sparsely populated as they are.

362. Chee! Ohafia kwenu!

Chee! Ohafia, give me your assent!

363. Audience: Woo!

TEXT 42: Egbele B1

1. Oo Nne Ugoenyi

   It is great mother Ugoenyi.

2. Oo ya wu onye mepuu iri-aha mbu.

   She is the person that first began the singing of war songs.

3. Nne m Ugoenyi wu onye mepuu iri-aha mbu.

   My great mother Ugoenyi is the person that first began the singing of war songs.

4. Ya wu umu Ezihiaba wuru Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-Enini.

   She that is of lineage of Eziaba which is of Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini.

5. Ya wuru Ebem Ujuru-kpoke.

   So then, she is of Ebem Ujuru-kpoke.

6. Ya wuru umu Eziaba, nde ugwu Uma Mgbo.

   So then, she is of the lineage of Eziaba, hill-dwelling offspring of Uma son of Mgbo.

7. Nne m Ugoenyi je a mu nwa, ya mua umu ano.

   My great mother Ugoenyi, due to bear children, begat four sons.

8. Oo ya mu Kamalu, opa-oku-eje-ogu.

   It is she that begat Kamalu, carrier-of-fire-into-battle.

9. Ya mua Uruku, Mgbada-uzo.

   And she begat Uruku, hare-of-the-narrow-paths.

10. Ya mua eleghe-emee-aki-bekere-dowe-ya-ukwu-mgbeghere.

    And she begat the-likeness-of-the-coconut-fruit-that-weighs-down-its-tree-giving-it-a-hooped-trunk.

11. Ya mua Egbele.

    And she begat Egbele.

12. Egbele wu onye o pa aka.

Egbele was the one she cuddled in her arms.

13. Umurima ya ohu ato ga je aha-nru-ali, wo fuhu aha.

Her first three sons left and went to an earth-sweeping war, and they all got lost in battle.

14. Ya fodukwa Egbele nani ya.

So it remained Egbele himself alone.

15. Wo e gbule umurima ya ato.

They had killed her first three sons.

16. Ya je e ru mgbe Egbele.

It went on so and reached the time of Egbele.

17. Ya si Egbele goo wuru nwa-agbogho.

She said to Egbele, 'I wish you could turn into a girl,

18. Ma goo gbekwa ogu eje,

That you may not also go to war,

19. Nta muo egbunaa yo o!

Lest they kill you and bereave me of you!'

20. Egbele duga tuehe.

So, Egbele remained but grew up more and more.

21. Je e ru, aha Ukpati tuupu.

It went on so, and then Okpatu war broke out.

22. Nna m Ugoenyi kutu Egbele nwa ya.

My great father Ugoenyi summoned Egbele his son.

23. 'Egbele nwa mi e!' Ya za.

'Egbele my son!' He answered.

24. 'Goo, nna go nwuhu, nne go nwuhu,

'You must understand that, when your father dies and your mother dies,

25. 'Goo ya-awu onye-ujo:

You will become a man-of-fear:

26. 'Goo turu aha Ukpati.'
'You should therefore get prepared and go to the Okpatu war.'

27. Egbele kwere.
Egbele agreed.

28. Ya daa aha Ukpati turu.
He got prepared and went to the Okpatu war.

29. Ya jehe aha Ukpati eje, bguo isi onye-ikom,
He had hardly gone into the Okpatu war when he killed and chopped off the head of a young man,

30. Ya kpaa onye olu buru ubu.
And he captured one man and slung him across his shoulders.

31. Ya buhu mbelege yaa bia rusa.
He carried him thus, proudly proudly, and he came and returned.

32. Mgbe ohu o rusaa Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,
When at last he returned to Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,

33. Wo jee kutu ya:
They went and called her (his mother):

34. 'Nne m Ugoenyi goo bia bua nwa go -
'My great mother Ugoenyi, come, come and gete your son -

35. 'Nwa go e gbule isi, o kpa onye-ndu.'
'Your son has won a head and he has a live-captive in his hands.'

36. Ya si ya ejighi okpogho ya ji abu mwa ya.
But she said she had no money to fete her son.

27. Ya ya-eji abu obi utuo ya-abua nwa ya:
She would rather fete her son with a song of joy from her heart:

38. Umu o umunne ya ato, muo a gaala Egbele duga.
Her sons, his three brothers, have all passed away before Egbele, leading the way.

39. Onwa onwa ni abaghi aha,
Now that this one has not been lost in battle,

40. Ya ya-eji obi-utuo je fu nwa ya.
She would go meet her son with a joyful heart.

41. Di yaa si wo je gwere obi utuo fu nwa ya.
Her husband also said they should go meet their son with a joyful heart.

42. Oo ife mee ni, wo mepue iri-aha.
That is what happened, and they first began the singing of war songs.

43. Oo wo abo mepuu iri-aha nye Ohafia Udumezema,
It is them both that began the singing of war songs and gave the art to Ohafia Udumezema,

44. Nye Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,
Gave to Ebem Ujur-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,

45. Nye umu Ezhiaba, umu ugwu Uma Mgbo:
Gave to the lineage of Eziaba, hill-dwelling offspring of Uma son of Mgba:

46. Egbele nwa m!
Egbele my son!

47. Je ayi jee, je iya!
Je ayi jee, je iya!

48. I wu Egbele nwa m!
Je ayi jee, je iya!
Je ayi yee, ye iya!

49. Yei, Egbele nwa m!

Yei, Egbele my son!

50. Je ayi jee, je iya!

Je ayi jee, je iya!

51. M tipue Egbele nwa m!

I cry out to Egbele my son!

52. Je ayi jee, je iya!

Je ayi jee, je iya!

53. I magi Egbele a luale!

Who does not know Egbele has returned!

54. Je ayi jee, je iya!

Je ayi jee, je iya!

55. I marale Egbele a luale?

Who has not heard that Egbele has returned?

56. Je ayi jee, je iya!

Je ayi jee, je iya!

57. Oo nne ayi ji mepue iri-aha!

That is how we first began to sing war songs.

TEXT 46: Nne Ucha Aruodo B1

1. Nne Ucha Aruodo!
   Great-mother Ucha Aruodo!
2. O je amu nwa wu Nne Ucha Aruodo -
   When she was due to bear children, she, great-mother Ucha Aruodo -
3. Onye Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,
   Person of Ebem Ujuru-Kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini,
4. Onye-oke Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini, Nde-uwa-oma-do-ite-abo.
   Great-one of Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini, Fortunate-ones-that-line-long-baskets-with-waterpots.
5. Ya je atu ime tuari mgbe o kapurule nka.
   And so, when she was due to get conceived, she got conceived when she was well-advanced in age.
6. Ya je amu nwa mua nwa agbogho.
   And when she was due to be delivered of her child, she was delivered of a baby-girl.
7. Ya ne-eche ya eche.
   She guarded her jealously.
8. Ya kuru nwanne ya nwaami....
   She took her own sister....
9. Ya kuru nwanta ohu dowere o.
   She took that little child and left in her custody.
10. Ya ga je ubi.
    She set out and went to farm.

11. Ya je aluo, nwanta nwaami, nwa-ugbo-m-nta, gbuo nwa ya ili.
But when she was due to return, the young woman, my-dear-little one, beat up her child.

12. Ya si nwanne ya nta:
She said to her young sister:

13. Go o mee agi gbuo nwa ya ili?
'What is it that made you beat up my child?'

14. Ya si go-muo-nta: O metuu nwa ya,
She siad, 'My-dear-little-one: she touched my own child.

15. O gbuu nwa ya ili, ya gbugwara o.
'She beat up my own child, so I beat her up in revenge.'

16. Ya si a nighi alu nwa o....
She (Ucha Aruodo) said: 'No one ever fights her child....

17. A nighi ogu nwa ike ike a dighi.
'No one ever fights the fight of a child that has no power'.

18. Ya na nwannie abo kwata.
She and her sister both pushed one another.

19. Nwanni ya buru ya zhie.
Her sister carried her up and threw her down.

20. Ucha Aruodo, nwa-ugbom, tichara aka okpu lapua.
Ucha Aruodo, my-dear-one, beat of the dust from her bottom and set off for home.

21. Nwa mu o anyi jee, iya!
Come, o come, my child, let us go, alas!

22. Onye a mughi nwa a nighi eri nwa ya!
'A person that has no child does not reap the joys of motherhood!

23. Onye a mughi nwa o wughi mmadu!
'A person that has no child is not a human being!

24. Aa, a, a, iye a di!

    Aa, a, a, iye a di!

25. Aa, a, a, iye a di, aha!

    Aa, a, a, iye a di, aha!

26. Aa, a, a, iye a di, aha di ya!

    Aa, a, a, iye a di, aha di ya!

TEXT 47: Nne Ucha Aruodo B2

1. Ucha Aruodo, onye mbgaga Ebem -
   Ucha Aruodo, person of Mgbaba Ebem -
2. Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini.
   Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini.
3. O tughi ime ngwa.
   She did not conceive in time.
4. O je atu ime ya-atua mgbe o tuehienle ezhi ezhie!
   But when she came to get conceived, she conceived when she had reached a very queenly age!
5. Ya je amu nwa mua nwaami.
   And when she came to be delivered of her child, she was delivered of a girl.
6. Ya si oo mi mwaami ohu o muu.
   She said, 'This child of mine is me.'
7. Ya gwere o dowere nne-omogo.
   She took her and left her in the custody of a nurse.
8. Ya ga je ubi.
   She set out and went to the farm.
9. Ya je aluo, nne-omogo odo gbuo nwa ya ili.
   But when she was due to return, another nurse beat up her child.
10. Nne ya lua.
    Her mother returned.
11. Mgbe ohu nne ya loo ubi,
    That time when her mother returned from farm,

12. Nwa ya gwere ya kaairi nne ya:
Her daughter took it (i.e. the story of her beating) and narrated to her mother.

13. Goo lelehi onye ya ili.
'There goes the person that beat me up.'

14. Ya juo, 'O wu onye?'
She asked, 'Who can she be?'

15. Ya si lelehi onye gbuu ya ili.
She said, 'There goes the person that beat me up.'

16. Nne ya choro onye ori gaa je.
Her mother set out in pursuit of that person.

17. Onye ori buru Ucha Aruodo jee zia.
But that person carried up Ucha Aruodo and threw her down.

18. Nwa ya ju, 'Nde a ife i ko we je ahosara mi?
Her child asked,'What is it that made you go to fend for me?

19. 'O gbuhale me ili, o burukwale gi jee shia.'
'Now, after beating me up, she has carried you up and thrown you down.'

20. Ya si nwa ya, 'Je anyi je laa:
She said to her child, 'Come, let us set out and go:

21. 'Gi amarale a nigi alu ogu nwa ike di,
'You know very well that no one ever fights the fight of a child that has power,

TEXT 48: Nne Ucha Aruodo B2

1 Ucha Aruodo, onye Mgbaga Ebem -

Ucha Aruodo, person of Mgbaga Ebem -

2 Ebem Ujuru-kpoke-nde-a-Mgbo-enini.

Ebem Ujuru-kpoke nde-a-Mgbo-enini.

3 O tughi ime ngwa.

She did not conceive in time.

4 O je atu ime ya-atua mgbe o tuehi enle ezhi ezhie!

But when she came to get conceived, she conceived when she had reached a very queenly age!

5 Ya je amu nwa mua nwaami.

And when she came to be delivered of her child, she was delivered of a girl.

6 Ya si oo mi nwaami ohu o muu.

She said, 'This child of mine is me'.

7 Ya gwere o dowere nne-omogo.

She took her and left her in the custody of a nurse.

8 Ya ga je ubi.

She set out and went to the farm.

9. Y je aluo, nne-omogo odo gbuo nwa ya ili.

But when she was due to return, another nurse beat up her child.

10. Nne ya lua.

Her mother returned.

11. Mgbe ohu nne ya loo ubi,

That time when her mother returned from farm,

12. Nwa ya gwere ya kaairi nne ya:

Her daughter took it (i.e. the story of her beating) and narrated to her mother:

13 Goo lelehi onye gbuu ya ili.

'There goes the person that beat me up'.

14 Ya juo, 'O wu onye?'

She asked, 'Who can she be?'

15 Ya si lelehi onye gbuu va ili.

She said, 'There goes the person that beat me up'.

16 Nne ya choro onye ori gaa je.

Her mother set out in pursuit of that person.

17 Onye ori buru Ucha Aruodo jee zia.

But that person carried up Ucha Aruodo and threw her down.

18 Nwa ya ju, 'Nde a ife i ko we je ahosara mi?

Her child asked, 'What is it that made you go to fend for me?

19 'O gbuhale m ili, o burukwale gi jee zhia.'

'Now, after beating me up, she has carried you up and thrown you down.'

20 Ya si nwa ya, 'Je anyi je laa:

She said to her child, 'Come, let us set out and go:

21 'Gi amarale a nigi alu ogu nwa ike di,

' You know very well that no one ever fights the fight of a child who has power,

TEXT 64: Nne Acho Ugo B1

1. Nne Acho Ugo Ebele.

   Great-mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele.

2. Nne Acho Ugo Ebele.

   Great-mother Acho Ugo, daughter of Ebele.

3. O bia muu umu nini iso.

   She came in her time and begat five sons.

4. Onye obu uzo mua, o wu Ugo.

   The first person she begat, it is Ugo (Eagle).

5. Ya gwere Ugo je dowe akwu.

   She took Ugo, went and placed him on a silk cotton tree.

6. Ya mua Nkwo.

   She then begat Nkwo (Hawk).

7. Ya buru Nkwo je dowe Okoghoro osisi.

   She took Nkwo, went and placed him in the crevice of a tree.

8. Ya mua Egbe.

   She then begat Egbe (Kite).

9. Ya gwere Egbe je doi -

   She took Egbe, went and placed him -

10. Ya si Egbe go ye-ebi elu akwa.

    She said to Egbe, 'Your dwelling-place shall be the top of the silk cotton tree.

11. Ya mua Akpala unara-iri.

    She then begat Akpala (Sunbird), the-bluffing-dancer.

12. Akpala Acho, ya ne-ete iri.

    Akpala son of Acho Ugo, he went on dancing.

13. Ya muo O turukpokpo Acho Ugo.

    And then she begat O tu ukpokpo (Woodpecker), son of Acho Ugo.

14. O turukpokpo Acho Ugo na-atu eleghe osisi muru.
O turukpokpo son of Acho Ugo went on pecking at all created trees:

15. Ya si ubochi Nne Acho Ugo ya-ala mmoṅ ya ya-atu azu ewei nne ya.
He boasted that the day great-mother Acho Ugo would return to the land of spirits, he would bore a hole in the azu tree for the burial of his mother.

16. Wa se asu, wo bagbutapue,
They, five of them, burst out boasting among themselves,

17. Nne wo ye-eji emezi nne wo, mgbe o ya-ala mmoṅ.
Concerning the ways they would honour their mother, when she would be on her way back to the land of spirits.

18. Ugo Acho Ugo si oo ya ke eleghe wo muru mma:
Ugo son of Acho Ugo boasted he was the most beautiful of them all:

19. Leghe anu-ufe muru oo ya ka muo mma.
Of all created fowls-of-the-air, he was the most beautiful.

20. Egbe Acho Ugo si ya ya-ano egbe egbe leghe ibe muru.
Egbe son of Acho Ugo boasted he would fire and fire guns as none of his fellows has ever done before.

21. Nkwo Acho Ugo si ubichi Nne Acho Ugo ya-ala mmoṅ ya ya-ano egbe egbe
Nkwo son of Acho Ugo boasted that the day great-mother Acho Ugo would return to the land of spirits, he would fire and fire guns
leghe ibe muru.
as none of his fellows has ever done before.

22. Akpala wu unara-iri si ya ya-efe eleghe ibe muru.
Akpala who is the-bluffing-dancer boasted he would fly and fly as none of his fellows has ever done before.

23. Ya ye-efe ka anu muru.
That he would fly more than all created animals.

24. Wo kwekota, wa aso,
They agreed among themselves, five of them,

25. Nne wo kaa nka bia nwuhu.
At last, their mother aged and died.

26. Mgbe ohu Nne Acho Ugo laga mmoṅ,
That time when great-mother Acho Ugo was on her way back to the land of spirits,

27. Anu-ufe dum bia nokota.
All the fowls-of-the-world gathered together.

28. 'Ndaa nde umu ya aso?'
'But where are they, her five children,'

29. Afuu wo, ma onye olu wo.
They were not seen, not even one of them.

30. Wo turu Ugo gaa akwu.
They sought Ugo and went to the silk cotton tree.

31. 'Nne Acho Ugo alagale mmoṅ.'
'Great-mother Acho Ugo is on her way back to the land of spirits.'

32. Ya juo, 'Oo ife unuo chosaa ya achosa?'
He questioned (then): 'Is that why all you people have come searching for me?'

33. Anu-ufe dum kwere.
All the fowls-of-the-air agreed.

34. 'Unu amaghi ya jee nwa ali ya je buru awo:
'Of course, you do not know that I have just carried off a toad from the ground:

35. 'O kuo nwa o otazu ya buru o.
'He was carrying his child

36. 'Nwa ya ohu aza Awa, o wu okwara ya.
'That child hers is named Awa, it is her firstborn child.

37. 'Ya weisa ali muo ye-eke ya eke,
'If I come down to the earth, they will no doubt catch and bind me,

38. 'Muo asi gwaara muo ochu.
'And they would require me to pay compensation for the felony.

39. 'Ya-gi ya anighe ejekwa ali odo.'
'As for me, I will not descend to the ground again!'

40. Wo je lea Nkwo.
They went and sought for Nkwo.

41. Nkwo si ya-gi ya buuru okuko (...) puru okpogho abo.
Nkwo said, 'As for me, I carried off a fowl (...) worth two pieces of okpogho.

42. 'Nde nwe okuko fu ya ali,
'If the owners of the fowl see me on the ground,

43. 'Muo ebuopuo ya okpo,
'They will surely take revenge on me,

44. 'Muo aluopuo ya okpo,
'They will surely wreck vengeance on me,

45. 'Leghe ibe muru, muo aligbuo ya.'
'As has never been done before, they will surely strangle me.'

46. 'Ya anighi ejekwa ali odo!'
'I will therefore never descend to the ground again!'

47. Wo je lee Egbe Acho Ugo.
They went and sought for Egbe son of Acho Ugo.

48. Wo si 'Nne Acho Ugo alale mmon!'
They declared, 'Alas, great-mother Acho Ugo is on her way to the land of spirits!'

49. Egbe Acho Ugo si ya anighe eje ali odo,
Egbe son of Acho Ugo said that he would never again descend to the ground,

50. Ya buuru nwa okuko, ikpurukpu bia o ya atuta:
Because he carried off a chick, and when a woodworm turned up, he picked it with his beak:

51. Ya anigi ejekwa ali odo.
He would therefore never return to the .

52. Wo je lea Akpala unara-iri.
They went and sought for Akpala, the-bluffing-dancer.

53. 'Go bia, Nne Acho Ugo alale mmon!'
'Come, come, for great-mother Acho Ugo has departed for the land of spirits!'

54. Ya si ya ne-ete iri.
He said he was busy dancing.

55. Umurima kpaa akika dowe ali;
On a ground where some children had drawn beautiful patterns:

56. Ya emebinale muo akika,
That he had spoilt the beautiful patterns they drew,

57. Ya amagha akika akpa:
And that he did not know how to draw such beautiful patterns:

58. Ya weisa ali, umurima ye-eke ye eke,
If he descended to the ground, the boys would surely capture him,

59. Ya kpaara muo akika:
And they would require him to draw such beautiful patterns for them:

60. Ya anigi eje afu nne ya anya.
He could therefore not go to see his mother.

61. Wo je lee O turukpokpo maara-atu.
They went and sought for Oturukpokpo, the-expert-pecker

62. Oturukpokpo maara-atu, nene-m-nta,
Oturukpokpo the-expert-pecker, my-pretty-grandmother,

63. O wu tuo ya akwo, fuo ya akwu*
(----)

64. (...)
(...)

65. Wo afugu muo, onu ya etue madu nko onwa*
(----)

66. O jikwa gini atu atu ewei nne ya*
(----)

67. Wo ruku choga Ugo Acho Ugo ri a akwu.
They set out*, went in search of Ugo son of Acho Ugo, up in the silk cotton tree.

68. 'Ugo Acho Ugo go pusa akwu go, ma wo kpai gi ife wo bia.'
'Ugo son of Acho Ugo, Please, come out from your silk cotton tree, and we shall tell you why we have come.

69. Ya zhia akwu ohu werere.
He flew out of that silk cotton tree, werere.

70. Wo daa ya jinde.
They quickly captured him.

71. Wo fere isi nku nko onwa, fere nko onwa.
And they reasoned, 'Is it right that your mother should return to the land of spirits with empty hands?'

72. Wo si Nne go o ya agba aka ala mmon?
And they reasoned, 'Is it right that your mother should return to the land of spirits with empty hands?'

73. Wo gwere ababa ya abọ tuwe Nne Achọ Ugo ifu.
They took those two plumes from him and adorned the face of great-mother Achọ Ugo with them.

74. Wo tuwe nkọ ọ, tuwe nkọ ọ: 'Oo nke gọ ya-ebu ala mmọn.'
They placed one this side and placed the other that side: 'Carry these with you as you return to the land of spirits.'

75. 'Go gbee aka agba ala mmọn.
'It is not right that you should return to the land of spirits with empty hands.

76. 'Go oya amu umu iso ga agbara aka laga mmọn?'
'Is it just that you that bore five sons should be left to return to the land of spirits with empty hands.

77. Oo ife meeni madu nwuhu, egwere Ugo tuwe ya,
This is the reason why, when a person dies, he is adorned with eagle-plumes.

78. Ye eturu mmọn laga.
And they wear them on their journey back to the land of spirits.

79. Ọ zhia Nne Achọ Ugo aka:
It is an inheritance from great-mother Achọ Ugo:

80. Nne Achọ Ugo Ebele!
Great-mother Achọ Ugo, daughter of Ebele.

APPENDIX II

COMPLETE LIST OF TEXTS CITED

A. Creation Myths

Text I: Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa F1

(Story of the Creation of the World)

Text 2: Akuko Bairi Okike Uwa F2

Text 3: Ife Meenu Jiakpu na-egbu ewu B1

(Why Goats die when they eat Cassava)

Text 4: Ife Meenu Jiakpu na-egbu ewu B2

Text 5: Agwu Akpu B1

Text 6: Agwu Akpu B2

Text 7: Leghe Anu Ofia ji mee ezhe F1

(How the Beasts of the forest elected the King).

Text 8: Leghe Anu Ofia ji mee ezhe F2

Text 9: Nkelu (Blue-bird) B1

Text 10: Akpala (Sun-bird) B2

B. Migration and Settlement

Text 11: Ibe Ohafia Zhia bia A1

Text 12: Ibe Ohafia Zhia bia B1

Text 13: Ibe Ohafia Zhia bia B2

Text 14: Ibe Ohafia Zhia bia F1

Text 15: Ibe Ohafia Zhia bia F2

Text 16: Ebulu Ijeoma B1

(Founding father of Aro-Ndizuogu)

C. The Heroes, 1: Hunting Heroes

Text 17: Elibe Aja B1

Text 18: Elibe Aja B2

Text 19: Elibe Aja B3

Text 20: Okpan Iko E1

Text 21: Kaalu Imaga E1

D. The Heroes, 2: Female Warriors

Text 22: Inyang Olugu B1

Text 23: Inyang Olugu B2

Text 24: Inyang Olugu B3

Text 25: Inyang Olugu B4

Text 26: Inyang Olugu F1

Text 27: Nne Mgbaafo A1

Text 28: Nne Mgbaafo B1

Text 29: Nne Mgbaafo B1

Text 30: Nne Mgbaafo B2

Text 31: Nne Mgbaafo B4

Text 32: Nne Mgbaafo C1

Text 33: Nne Mgbaafo F1

E. The Heroes, 3: Male Warriors

Text 34: Idika D1

Text 35: Amoogu B1

Text 36: Amoogu B2

Text 37: Amoogu B3

Text 38: Amoogu B4

Text 39: Amoogu B5

Text 40: Amoogu C1

Text 41: Amoogu F1

F. The Heroes, 4: The Great Mothers

Text 42: Egbele B1

Text 43: Egbele B2

Text 44: Egbele B3 (=Ucha Aruodo B4)

Text 45: Egbele F1

Text 46: Ucha Aruodo B1

Text 47: Ucha Aruodo B2

Text 48: Ucha Aruodo B3

Ucha Aruodo B4 (=Egbele B3)

Text 49: Nne Afoji D1

G. The Heroes, 5: Dancing Heroes

Text 50: Ogbaka Okorie B1

Text 51: Ogbaka Okorie B2

Text 52: Ogbaka Okorie B3

Text 53: Ijeoma Kaalu B1

H. The Heroes, 5: Wrestlers

Text 54: Ogbaga C1

Text 55: Ogbaga D1

Text 56: Kaalu Eze nwa Mgbo B1

I. The Heroes, 7: Wine-tappers

Text 57: Ukurube E1

Text 58: Di-ochi Oku-ngwo F1

Text 59: Ibe Mmai Zhia Bia F1

J. The Heroes, 8: Farmers

Text 60: Ugo Nneobo E1

Text 61: Eleke Uduma E1

K. The Heroes, 9: The Kind Old Man

Text 62: Nnam Oyooyo E1

L. The Heroes, 10: Country Doctors

Text 63: Ikwogho B1

M. Allegorical and Moral Tales

Text 64: Nne Acho Ugo B1

Text 65: Nne Acho Ugo B2

Text 66: Egbe nri adighi ya gbuo Onye Onweghi ife omee B1
(The unloaded gun that killed an innocent man)

N. Contemporary History

Text 67: Ogu Mmekota Naijiria B1

(War of Nigerian Unity)

Text 68: Ogu Mmekota Naijiria B2

Text 69: Eni Njoku F1

(Biographical profile of the Late Professor Eni Njoku, formerly Vice-Chancellor of the Universities of Lagos and Nigeria)

O. Invocative War Songs

Text 70: Nde Ikike Ohafia A1

(The Brave Ones of Ohafia)

Text 71: Nde Ikike Ohafia B1

Text 72: Nde Ikike Ohafia B2

Text 73: Nde Ikike Ohafia D1

Text 74: Nde Ikike Ohafia F1

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